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The romance of escapes

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... at a place called Soldatskaia, he was robbed of his principal passport.

See p. 153.

(Frontispiece)

# THE ROMANCE OF ESCAPES

STUDIES OF SOME HISTORIC FLIGHTS  
WITH A PERSONAL COMMENTARY

BY TIGHE HOPKINS

AUTHOR OF "THE DUNGEONS OF OLD PARIS," "THE MAN IN THE IRON  
MASK," "THE SILENT GATE: A VOYAGE INTO PRISON," "WARDS  
OF THE STATE: AN UNOFFICIAL VIEW OF PRISON AND  
THE PRISONER," ETC., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

You have cause  
(So have we all) of joy ; for our escape  
Is much beyond our loss.

"Tempest," ii. 1.

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles.

TENNYSON.

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

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TO  
MY DAUGHTER  
MAY EILEEN



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## INTRODUCTION

THE great escape expands into a drama. Plot will not be wanting : choice and combination of means ; cunning, endurance, boldness, and an attitude for all hazards ; while of action there can seldom be a stint. Plot and action should be nicely balanced ; and the end will show the man. Often, indeed, this kind of adventure is a supreme touchstone of character. In every case it is the skill and daring of the prisoner in the cage against the utmost that authority can do to hold him there.

A game so energetic and exacting is not for the spiritless or faint, and it need surprise us little that the famous instances are few. "Have you had many escapes from here?" I asked a warder at Wormwood Scrubbs. He pointed to the window of a cell rather high up, and said : "Years ago—ten or twelve, I think—an old lag let himself out there by his bed-clothes. He's the only one I remember."

The soldier, we may take it, is of quite different stuff from the habitual frequenter of gaols. His training for the sharp conclusions of war quickens, as the drill-book says, his powers of initiative, of self-confidence, of self-restraint. He "must labour in his vocation" to bear serenely and with a tutored mind fatigue, privation, and the terrors and perils of the day. He learns to see in the night-time, to make nothing of obstacles, to use both brain and weapon coolly and to the best advantage in a crisis. In war,

then, we count on something handsome in escapes ; yet this theatre itself furnishes but a very small number of historic exploits of the sort. Briefly (and contrary, I think, to the general belief), in war as in peace the notable evasions are extremely rare. " We that are in the vanward of our youth " may essay the rampart, the tunnel, or the headlong dash : not many others.

But for all this, the subject is of a very titillating variety. No two escapes are ever quite alike. Half a dozen men in half a dozen places may be burrowing a path to freedom ; but scene, situation, implements will in each place modify the effort, endue it with a character of its own. If prison-breaking is always a formidable design, it is sometimes more formidable in the preparation, sometimes in the momentous instant of doing. Would you delve with Colonel Rose night by night in the airless and coffin-like passage under Libby Prison, or stand with Prince Kropotkin in the yard of the Military Hospital of St. Petersburg, waiting the signal of the violin to make a dash under the eyes of the sentry ? These are both escapes of quality ; but the first is a giant's task, while the second—everything, of course, being made ready in advance—is done like lightning. If, on the surface, most escapes seem a little of a pattern, they present in reality an infinite diversity of plan and detail ; and in every tale the reader is paid with something new.

Sparse in history as the great flights are, from eras the oldest to the campaign we are engaged in, there are choice enough and scope enough for an effort at fresh treatment of a topic which during five-and-twenty years has been as good as lost to us. There is, moreover, at this date a little to be said on it that has



not and that could not have been said before. "That old bald cheater, Time," has been among the dust of these adventurers, flinging up against some of them an awkward thing or two. To a certain small batch of escapes a classic rank has been assigned. Of these the pre-eminent one is probably Latude's. At the hands of the brilliant Funck-Brentano, Latude receives at last his destined potion, and passes in eclipse. To Latude, in classic station, would possibly succeed Casanova. In charm, picturesqueness, raciness, and sustained force of narrative the pair are rivals, though the Italian is infinitely the more attractive. As to the faith to be reposed in Casanova's absorbing legend, my mind had long been very dark. In darkness, who but the god of it, Mercury himself, descended on me. My Mercury is French, and a man of science—and of all the sciences Mercury was also god and patron. The seeker's providence led me to Dr. Guède's enlightening, humorous, and destructive criticism in the "Mercure de France"—a deadly court of appeal for defendants with a doubtful docket. Comparing with my own hesitant notes the results of Dr. Guède's examination on the very scene of the amazing voyage, I gradually and easily decided that he had written Casanova's epitaph. It was earlier composed by Falstaff: "Lord, Lord, how this world is given to lying!"

The most ancient parts of the story of escapes are at this day scarcely worth a glance. For all the facts that we can glean from them, these records are as water spilt on the ground. Was Aristomenes led out of his ravine by a fox? Did Hegesistratus cut his foot off to release it from the fetter? Did Caius Marius, at the age of seventy, find the vessel equipped to receive him? Belief must here ripen into faith—

though we have it from a wise man of Greece that knowledge may be lost by incredulity.

The most of my examples have been selected as showing some special power or felicity in escape (with or without aid given to the prisoner or the fugitive) ; but I have gathered also whatever yields an opening for criticism. The best of the modern narratives, such as Donat O'Brien's, John Mitchel's, Prince Kropotkin's, Captain Haldane's, are of a very patent veracity : it is not so with some of the liveliest and most engrossing of their predecessors. " Air my hands clean or air they dirty ? " Mr. Scadder asks ; and it will not do to set a magnifying-glass to the pen-hand of certain entertainers in this class. Time, however, is an efficient *juge d'instruction* ; and time backed by the Archives will take considerable beating. " Remember the Archives ! " should have been whispered in the ear of every State prisoner of the eighteenth century who had a mind to pluck posterity by the nose. In all capitals of Europe at this day the Archives lie open to the curious, and these documents have brought to the test several inflated reputations.

This carries me from Casanova to Buquoit. Through the Archives of the Bastille Funck-Brentano tracks Latude. Through his own and Ravaisson's transcripts of these memorials I have come to a fairly close reckoning with the " Abbé Count de Buquoit." Precisely who this ingratiating trickster was no one will ever now succeed in saying ; and, in the phrase of the elder Mr. Weller, he has " what the Italians call reg'larly flummoxed " the few native students of his ingenious and perplexing memoirs. I at least trace him (and this has not till now been done) to the company of Defoe's

" Lords, whose parents were the Lord knows who."

From any useful survey of the War I am, of course, precluded. It is certainly not in the midst of a struggle unparalleled that we shall look for a detailed account of escapes on either side. The reason is plain. To the comrades whom he leaves behind, the man on the wing from detention camp or fortress is bound by a soldier's debt of honour. Has someone helped to free him? For the friends' sake in durance he keeps a close mouth on this. Has he invented some new and happy plan? He makes a discreet bequest of it for the profit of the prisoner who may follow him. Mr. Winston Churchill, baffling his guards in Pretoria, at an early stage of the Boer War, very properly persuades his readers to the notion that he accomplished unassisted a splendid run to the Portuguese frontier. Captain Haldane, breaking from the Staats Model School some weeks later, and taking, in the main, the same line of country (though without inspiration from Mr. Churchill), gives us first a taste of his venture in "Blackwood," waits until the war has fallen, and then discloses to us, point by point, how it all was done.

When the records of the War are complete it may be possible to discuss the question, whether or not the art of escape has declined. It need not be prejudged. Of the most heroic of the sallies from captivity throughout the long crusade against Napoleon we knew nothing until long after the drums had ceased on the last march of the last of his immortal legions. So far as the War has gone, the rubber is ours. There is no note of any successful flight from England; and one German officer, arrested, I think, on the borders of Cumberland, is reported to have said that "escape from England was impossible." Lieutenant Otto Koehn, a young

■

officer of the German mercantile marine, after fourteen hours in a packing-case, was accidentally unpacked at Tilbury. On the part of the enemy this is the most sporting adventure that has been disclosed to us. Through Cardinal de Retz and Grotius it takes us to the buck-basket of the "Merry Wives."

On our side we shall presently no doubt hear more from Mr. Bernard Watkins, Lieutenant J. L. Hardy (of the Connaught Rangers, who after a bold and successful bid for liberty is again a captive), and Sergeant Sydney Jagers, whose diary, submitted to me by him, condenses the experiences of a British prisoner of war in Germany.

My old friend, Mr. A. Ashe Roberts, will permit me to thank him for the untiring help he has lent me in the reading-room of the British Museum. Casanova and Buquoit will be little grateful to him. My own gratitude can be but feebly expressed.

Major-General Haldane, commanding the 3rd Division of the British Expeditionary Force in France, has been most kindly at the pains of sending me from the trenches a charming postscript to his great adventure in South Africa.

The Librarian and Staff of the London Library have spared no efforts for me.

For the copying of extracts my cordial thanks are due to Mr. G. E. Simmonds.

T. H.

# I

## ON THE ART AND MYSTERY OF ESCAPE

*"A lucky chance, that oft decides the fate."*—THOMSON.

*"Endurance is the crowning quality."*—LOWELL.

*"Ouvrez la marche!"*—BOILEAU.



# ON THE ART AND MYSTERY OF ESCAPE

## I. WHERE FICTION CANNOT ENTER

**L**ET us taste at once the surprises of the theme. To be present as a spectator at the rehearsal of one's own death by guillotine ; to watch the dripping blade at work ; to say, " Two more, and it will be I " ; and then, insensibly and at a breath, to drift bodily from the scene, to leave it clean behind, to find oneself tabled at a tavern and cracking a bottle with a stranger : this is a passage of dreamland—or the Reign of Terror.

The tumbril was creeping through Paris to Sanson's guillotine ; at a foot's pace, that the people in the streets might have their afternoon's pleasure of it. Other tumbrils had doubtless gone before (Fouquier-Tinville was a very good stage-manager, and the bill of the day could be relied on), for the dusk was just beginning. There were fifteen or twenty prisoners in the cart, their wrists secured at the back. One of them was a nobleman named Châteaubrun, on whom, for this instant of time, history alights. He is not met with before, nor ever again.

After twelve or fifteen executions some part of the guillotine gave way, and a workman was sent for to mend it. Châteaubrun, his hands tied behind him, was standing close under the machine ; a crowd of spectators at his rear. The workman came, and

set about his task ; and now all the onlookers forgot the prisoners who were to die, and watched the carpenter patching the guillotine. Châteaubrun, passive and resigned but very weak and weary, leaned on the persons nearest to him ; the ranks opened mechanically, and he sank mechanically through them. Before he was aware of it he stood outside the throng, and no one had taken the least notice of him.

The workman had finished his work ; Sanson sheared another head ; and now it was almost dark.

Châteaubrun looked this way and that, and ran as fast as he could to the Champs Élysées. Here he met a man returning from the day's labour, to whom he at once addressed himself. "Citizen," said Châteaubrun, "pray don't laugh, though the plight you see me in must look a little droll. Some friends have played a joke on me. Tying my hands behind me, they whisked off my hat, telling me to go and find it. I propose to be even with them. Have you a knife ? Ah ! Now perhaps you will do me the favour of cutting this ridiculous cord."

The man seemed highly amused, and immediately did as he was requested. "Thank you," said Châteaubrun, "and now in return you must take a glass with me." They went to one of the little drinking-shops of the locality and Châteaubrun called for wine. Sitting a while with his deliverer, he pretended to be surprised at the non-appearance of the comrades who had victimised him. Presently he asked if the man would bear a note for him to another friend ; "for," said he, "I've had enough of walking without a hat ; and now I remember, those other fellows have taken my purse as well." Off went the innocent and amiable guest, and in half an hour returned, bringing with him the good genius





Now perhaps you will do me the favour of cutting this ridiculous cord.



to whom the note had been despatched; and the tragi-comedy was ended.

This "*histoire merveilleuse*," as the French narrator rightly calls it, will be found in the memoirs of the Comte de Vaublanc, who also, but for his own adroitness, had been shaved by the national razor.<sup>1</sup>

Take next the adventure in a London street of Robert Hepburn, of Keith, a Jacobite of the 1715. There were Jacobites who found it easier to elude their gaolers than to perceive the axis of the earth in the middle of a city unknown to them. Hepburn, a man of immense strength, rapped his warder over the sconce, snatched the bunch of keys, and let himself out. He was aware that his wife and some friends of his faction were come to the capital in the hope and with the notion of a rescue; but in London he was as wretchedly astray as he would have been in the city of the Caliphs. Should he not ask his way? His Scots accent would betray him. At this pass, straying hither and thither, salvation on a sudden stared at him from a window. It was a notable piece of plate, which in that situation made a singular bid for attention: an ancient treasure of the family, the Tankard of Keith. Hepburn opened the door, and his wife her arms.

Were I to choose as a text these two episodes, essentially different, lying in the by-paths of history, but surely of a rare quality, it would be an obvious reflection that they are scarcely at all like the work of the novelist. Would Dumas have risked a page on Châteaubrun, or Scott a paragraph on Hepburn? Fiction, to be acceptable, must in some way try to reduce to calculation the amount of credence to be

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires de M. le Comte de Vaublanc, avec avant-propos et notes par M. Fs. Barrière." Paris, 1857.

given to events (the mathematical doctrine of probability) ; and so many of the escapes that make the liveliest appeal to the fancy lie altogether in the realm of the incalculable. When the novelist of genius elects to dispense with calculation, he must as a rule have recourse to his power of sheer hypnotisation. For the whole affair of the Château d'If in "Monte Cristo," magnificent is the only fitting word ; but having swallowed it at a gulp, let us hurry on with the story ; for it would never do to cross-examine the great showman as to how Dantès really got into and out of the sack. An inferior (but by no means untalented) English artist, exploiting for his novel a very fictitious Portland, depicts a convict carrying into and secreting in his cell an iron hook useful for grappling. I wondered, while reading the book, whether the writer had ever witnessed the search-parade of prisoners on coming off the quarries, or the periodical turning-over of a cell by the warders. Among the happiest strokes of narrative in English fiction is the flight of two prisoners of war in "Peter Simple" ; but to how many of Marryat's readers is it known that he was adapting (and very skilfully) the recent adventures of Donat O'Brien ?

In a tale the most cunning and captivating, who of us would heartily credit the toils of Trenck in his dungeon of Magdeburg, or of Colonel Rose in the tunnel under Libby Prison ; the escape of nine—hanging on the very bell-rope—from the *Bagne* of Brest ; the art of Arigonde (chained to a fellow-sufferer in another *Bagne*) in slipping his ankle from the ring and marching out of prison in broad light ; the convenient madness of the governor of St. Angelo in Benvenuto Cellini's time ; the disguise

of Louis Nāpoleon as a mason; of Mary Queen of Scots as a laundress (forgetting to stain those pearly hands!); of Lavalette in the clothes of his wife; the audacity of "Abbé Bucquoy," who literally burns his way out of For-l'Évêque; the journey of Grotius in the trunk in the care of the deffest of waiting-women (though for this, to be sure, there is warrant in Falstaff's buck-basket); the pains of Blanche Gamond; the luck of Charles II and Charles Edward; the endurance of Latude; the plight of the Empress in the hands of the gallant dentist; the force and swift-ness of Jack Sheppard and Daniel Malden; the hoax of Isaac Arnauld on the guards at Esslingen; the ease with which Jean Bart evades the look-out on the English guard-ship; the saving of the twelve priests by Geoffroy St. Hilaire on the eve of the September Massacres; the case of Stanislaus of Poland in the peasant's hut to which the Cossacks come for breakfast; and almost every incident in the closing scenes of the romanesque achievement of Beniowski?

## II. TWO QUEENS

Returning for a space to the French Revolution, I may very briefly note one salient fact: that, while this period is the epitome, reflection, and expression of every known and conceivable vicissitude of human fortune,<sup>1</sup> the escapes are very few on the part of those who were condemned at Fouquier-Tinville's bar. The situation of Châteaubrun is doubtless unique, but the chance by which he profited may have fallen to many others. When the moment arrives, presence of mind is everything. I recall,

<sup>1</sup> If account be taken of the tragedy of the Little Dauphin in the Temple prison (from which I think he was *not* released), these vicissitudes may be said to begin almost at the cradle.

while unable to fix the circumstances, the instance of another prisoner of the Terror who had received his way-bill for the guillotine. Somehow he missed his place in the cart ; visionless, stupefied with fright, he followed after it, struggled his way blindly through the crowd, intent on meeting death—and met it.

It is to this period that the two supreme failures belong. The wretched ending of the famous flight to Varennes lies solely at the door of Louis XVI. Consider that he was not even arrested there, that from the Paris Government no instructions about him had been received. An ounce of Kingly wit, of Kingly resolution, and he had brought that luckless carriage with its luckless freight in safety to the frontier.<sup>1</sup>

To Marie Antoinette, in the long season of her trial, resolution was never lacking ; but what could the poor Queen do in her Temple prison ? Yet there was one plot which, had a Fersen been at hand to guide and control it, might not impossibly have triumphed. Costumes had been smuggled in for the ladies ; the Little Dauphin (or Little King, he was, at this date) was to be carried out in a basket. Once beyond the prison, with but a few hours' start, the fugitives might have reached the coast.

Lepître<sup>2</sup> tells us in his "Souvenirs" :

<sup>1</sup> " O Louis ; O hapless Marie Antoinette, fated to pass thy life with such men ! Phlegmatic Louis, art thou but lay semi-animate phlegm, then, to the centre of thee ? King, Captain-General, Sovereign Frank ! if thy heart ever formed, since it began beating under the name of heart, any resolution at all, be it now then, or never in this world " (Carlyle, " The French Revolution " ).

<sup>2</sup> Jacques François Lepître, one of the Commissioners on duty at the Temple, was in the confidence of the Queen, and had charge of the plot. This Lepître, says Paul Gaulot ( " A Conspiracy under the Terror " ), had been a schoolmaster. " He had neither the physique nor the mind of a hero, yet he had enough imagination to be one. He was a strange mixture of bravery, cautiousness, and even faint-heartedness. "

“ Our dispositions were such that no one could have started in pursuit of us sooner than five hours after our departure. We had calculated everything. First, the servants did not go up to the tower before nine o'clock to set the table and serve supper. The Queen would have asked to have supper only at half-past nine. They would have had to knock several times at the door, and, being surprised at getting no answer, they would question the sentry, who, having been changed at nine o'clock, could not know what had happened. Then they would have been obliged to go down to the council room and inform the two other members of their surprise. After this they would have to go up a second time with the officers, knock again, and call the previous sentries, from whom they could only gather very scanty information. A locksmith would have to be sent for to open the doors, as one was of strong oak, covered with large nails, and the second was made of iron. Both had such strong locks that they would have had to be smashed, or else a very large hole to be cut in the main wall. After this the turret apartments would have to be visited ; and Tison<sup>1</sup> and his wife might be strongly shaken without awakening them. The servants would have again to go down to the council room, write out a report, take it to the Communal Council, which, supposing it was not yet over, would have lost more time in futile discussion. Lastly the police, the mayor, etc., would have to be informed. . . . All these delays would give us time to proceed on our flight. Our passports would be in order, as I was then president of the Passport Committee, and could prepare them myself. We were

<sup>1</sup> Tison and his wife, nominally in the service of the Queen, had been placed by the Commune as informers at the Temple.

thus left in no uneasiness concerning our journey so long as we kept well in advance."

But it was the pusillanimity of Lepître himself that brought the plot to nothing. When the deed was to do, he backed straight out of it; and how pathetic is this picture of the poor, proud, humbled Queen, seeking to hearten the faint-heart by the offer of a lock of her hair, with a little motto: "Small is their love who fear to love." Lepître preserved the hair,—and the head on his shoulders. Not long afterwards, scissors were again at the fair Greek neck<sup>1</sup> of Marie Antoinette, wielded this time by the executioner's assistant on the threshold of the Conciergerie, Sanson himself busy in binding her hands. "My God! Oh! my God!" the poor woman cried aloud.<sup>2</sup>

More greatly blest in her champion was that mysterious enchantress, the puzzle of all historians, she who if good was not conspicuously clever, and who if bad was among the subtlest of her sex: Mary Queen of Scots. Good or bad, few were they that could resist the caresses of her voice, the cajolements of her glance; and the wonder is, not that she twice

<sup>1</sup> "Her head, erect on her beautiful Greek neck, lent her as she walked such an imposing, such a majestic air, that one seemed to see a goddess in the midst of her nymphs" ("Memoirs of Madame Lebrun").

<sup>2</sup> Lenôtre, in his tragical but fascinating history, "The Last Days of Marie Antoinette," mentions a project for her rescue by Mme. Guyot. "Mme. Guyot, head nurse of the Hospice de l'Archevêché, had formed a project for rescuing Marie Antoinette. To this end she had caused a request to be made, on the pretext of illness, for the removal of Her Majesty to the hospital established in the Archbishop's Palace, where M. Ray, with the help of M. Giraud, the surgeon at the Hôtel-Dieu, had already broken and wrenched away the bar of a window opening into a covered way that led to the Seine, in the direction of the Île Saint-Louis. The barbarous Fouquier-Tinville, fearing lest his victim should escape him, would never consent to the transference."



made opportunity of flight, but that she made it twice and no more. The story of the young Queen's first attempt to leave Loch Leven in the attire of the laundress who fetched her linen to the castle is not of special importance. To the inveterate student of these things it is of small moment that a well-ordered effort at escape is by misadventure in the end frustrated. Well-ordered it must be, however, and in this instance a woman comes to grief in the article in which, two hundred and seventy-eight years later, a man, Louis Napoleon, was to show himself an adept—I mean, in the article of toilet. The second and successful flight is, of course, a familiar history; but it claims a tribute in virtue of the uncommon prowess of its chief abettor, the "Little Douglas." Here is an obscure, devoted, and debonair lad of seventeen,<sup>1</sup> in whom resides the genius itself of prison-breaking. The Queen is in the straitest confinement in her chamber. She does not even go down to supper, at which meal, she excepted, the whole household is assembled. The keys of the castle lie on the supper-board at the Governor's right hand. How does the Little Douglas, at the instant of replenishing the Governor's plate, abstract them? He runs with the keys to Mary's room, releases her, leads her downstairs, "*locking every door behind him on his way,*" hands her into the boat at the lake's edge, and in the middle of the lake flings the keys into the water. Fished out of it in 1805, or thereabouts, the keys are now at Kinross, in witness. The "wild ride" to Seton's house of Longniddry and the rest of the adventure are in the pure romantic style; but history appro-

<sup>1</sup> "William, a foundling lad of seventeen" (Lang, in the second volume of his "History of Scotland").

priates the boy Douglas as the magician of this hejira.

### III. THE SPLENDID RÔLE OF THE WOMEN

We are still in company of the ladies. If through these adventures their rôle is more often ancillary than principal, it is always a lively one ; and not seldom the god in the bush of an escape that has perplexed its generation is a goddess. Who but Dame Hepburn thinks of carrying the Tankard of Keith from Scotland to London, and setting it as a beacon in the window of her lodging ? In the twilight of the seventeenth century a certain Duguay-Trouin, captain of the frigate *La Diligente*, lay prisoner of war at Plymouth. In love with a pretty young lady of the town was the English captain of the guard, whose suit the Frenchman undertook to advance. The lady and the interesting captive had been but a little while on the footing of friendship when she began to be warm about a plan for his escape, and took counsel for him with a Swedish skipper in the harbour. And it came to pass that one evening, when the captain of the guard imagined that his cause was pleading, the young lady was assisting the prisoner over a garden wall, on his way to the vessel of the Swede. In like manner does Beniowski, prisoner of the Russians in Kamtschatka, a gallant and engaging young aristocrat, profit by the passion for him of Aphanasia, youngest daughter of the Governor ; but the tale, wondrous in all its phases, is too long for us.

Among the Jacobite dames was Lady Nithisdale, who, to the wit of Mrs. Hepburn, added the courage of the true conspirator. Her husband, Earl of Nithisdale, a Catholic lord of high connections and

boundless wealth, had been cast for death. The petition of the Countess, on her knees, had been rejected by George I; and on the morning of the 24th of February, 1715, Colonel D'Oyly, Deputy of the Tower, waited on Nithisdale in his chamber, to conduct him to execution. The room was empty. A most excellent vanishing trick had been performed the night before. The Countess, a resolute, blue-eyed beauty of six-and-twenty, had contrived it all. Leave had been granted her to bid her husband farewell on the eve of his death. Through snow and storm, on horseback and by coach, she had sped from the North to London; and at her first interview with Nithisdale in the Tower had privily imparted to him her design. She would dress him up as a woman, and he should walk boldly through the guards. To the Earl, a tall soldier of his inches, and bearded, this seemed a very ladylike conceit; but the brave young wife scoffed at all peril. Of her few friends in London were Miss Hilton, slender and of good stature, and Mrs. Mills, of good stature and buxom, with whom the Countess lodged in Drury Lane. These heroines stepped fearlessly into the plot. Razor, rouge, paste and wig Lady Nithisdale (another who has the genius of escape in her blood!) had left with her husband. On the afternoon of February 23rd, Miss Hilton came to Mrs. Mills's, and the ladies rehearsed their parts. Nithisdale, his wife had decided, must attempt to leave the Tower in the character of the tall and buxom Mrs. Mills; and among them they "were to try a scheme of baffling, personation, and disguise."<sup>1</sup> What follows would be, indeed, not so much a Shakespearean "Comedy of Errors" as a Palais Royal farce, were it

<sup>1</sup> Hepworth Dixon, "Her Majesty's Tower."

not that, comedy or farce, a man's life hangs upon its fortunes ; and through the rapid scenes the heart-beats of the wife resound. Miss Hilton " was to play the part of Mrs. Catherine, Mrs. Mills to play the part of Mrs. Betty. They would drive, with Evans and herself, at dusk of evening, to the Tower. Evans would wait near D'Oyly's door, but not so near as to excite attention from the other guard. The other women should go in and see the Earl. Miss Hilton, who was slim, should wear two riding hoods, her own and that of Mrs. Mills. She would go in as Mrs. Catherine, drop her extra clothes, and leave as quickly as she could. Mrs. Mills, who was rotund and full, should then go in as Mrs. Betty, wearing a riding hood to fit the Earl. Hilton was to step in light and jaunty ; Mills was to mop in drowned in tears, and with a kerchief at her face. Hilton was to slip away unnamed ; but Mills, having shrunk in size and changed her dress for that in which Hilton entered, was to leave as Mrs. Catherine. All of it turns upon the skill of Lady Nithisdale in befooling the guards and sentries as to the identity of the persons who enter and leave the Tower.

" On coming to the Tower, and entering Colonel D'Oyly's house, they found some girls and women in the Council Chamber who had come to see her pass ; for many of the keepers' wives and daughters feared, in spite of the report of pardon, that their charming lady would not see the Earl alive next night. The presence of these women filled the room with noise, and helped to turn the sentries from their careful watch. Lady Nithisdale took in Hilton first, presenting her as Mrs. Catherine. Miss Hilton shed the extra clothing to be worn by Mrs. Mills, and then retired, accompanied to the staircase by

her ladyship, who said to her aloud at parting, 'Send my maid to me ; I must be dressed at once, or I shall be too late with my petition.' Mrs. Mills came up the stairs, a tall stout woman, great with child, who held her kerchief to her eyes, and seemed half dead with grief. The Countess called her Mrs. Betty. In Lord Nithisdale's room she changed her clothes and stayed some time, and then went out with a lighter step, and head held up, attended by the Countess, who was saying to her, 'Go, my dear Mrs. Catherine, go in all haste, and send my maid ; she certainly cannot reflect how late it is ; she forgets that I am to present a petition to-night. I shall be on thorns till she comes !' The women sobbed with her, and one of the sentries, chatting with these women, opened the door for Mills to leave."

This was first-rate, but the vital moment is now. As to what had passed, were the guards in any way suspicious ? A slender lady, brisk and jaunty, and a big stout lady, all tears, had come and gone, and the lady who had entered as Mrs. Betty had departed as Mrs. Catherine. Had anyone smelled a rat ? "It was nearly dark, and keepers might come in with lights. A candle would unveil them ; they must act at once. The Countess, therefore, shook down all her petticoats save one, and tied them round her lord. Too dark to shave, he thrust his chin into a muffler ; and his cheeks being painted red, his ringlets twisted round his brow, his petticoats and hood put on, she raised the latch and led him by the hand, as she had done the woman, but with deeper misery of voice exclaiming, 'For the love of God, my dear Mrs. Betty, run, and bring her with you. You know my lodgings, and if ever you made despatch in your life, do it at present. I am

almost distracted with this disappointment.' The sentries let them pass, and one of these sentries ran and opened the chamber door."

Beyond the farthest door, the maid Evans (a hardy and devoted Welsh girl, who plays her anxious part with address) pounced upon the Earl, and led him off. Lady Nithisdale's own part was not yet finished. All through the scene she has been clamouring for Evans ; and now, alone in the empty chamber of her husband, she bustles up and down the floor ; talking to him, answering for him "in a manly voice" ; until she thinks that, Heaven befriending, he must now be clear of the Tower precincts. Then, lifting the latch and stepping out, she bids him a loud good night. She must and will find Evans, she says ; will come again with word of her petition—if not to-night, to-morrow morning. "My lord is at his prayers ; do not disturb him !" she whispers to the guard, and vanishes. Estimating the duration of the scene in minutes, and the exposure of every minute to the danger that might result in loss, this is perhaps the most poignant piece of acting in history.

Had the rising of 1715 been managed with genius, there was a chance for it. For Charles Edward in the '45 there was scarce a chance at all. A mournful tale, this of the last throw of Jacobitism, which was already little more than a thing of the past, "the last word of feudalism and the Middle Ages." Yet there are tingling and heroic moments in it ; and Charles himself, with his delicate "Sobieski face," his unfailing charm, his soldier's pluck and sportsman's skill,<sup>1</sup> and the high and loyal heart he carries

<sup>1</sup> Lang, in "Prince Charles Edward," tells how he astonished the Highlanders by shooting grouse on the wing.



... she raised the latch and led him by the hand.





through adversity, is at this stage of his career the true and irresistible fairy prince. Admirable also, after Culloden, when a great price is on his head, is the fealty of the hundreds of persons who are sharers of his secret ; many of them poor wanderers and outcasts like himself ; those seven robbers whose cavern he inhabits for three weeks ; and lean and hungry peasants by the score, no one of whom ever gives a thought to the blood-money. Here again rides to the rescue another of the women of history. The name of Flora Macdonald is even now a peculiar sweet savour ; the Nausicaa—an anonymous eulogist calls her—of Charles's Odyssey. " Here," says Mr. Lang, " romance reaches a happy moment. The full moon, and the late lingering daylight, showed to each other two persons whose names live together as innocently as immortally : the fair and beautiful girl, brave, gentle, and kind, and the way-worn wanderer, the son of a line of kings. About them were the shadowy hills, below them the vast Atlantic plain. It was the crisis of Charles's wanderings, and he knew not how to escape from the hunters on the island, and the cordon of vessels in the creeks and along the shores. Here, in the doubtful lights and in the dim sheiling, he met his preserver." All know how the pair set forth together, the noble Flora, and the Prince in the travesty of Betty Burke the maid. Known also is the conclusion of the great adventure, when, after 'scapes, hardships, and privations unsurpassed in history, on the 19th day of September, from Loch Naruagh, Charles, with Lochiel and Lochgarry, set sail for France. It's

Farewell to Lochaber, farewell to my Jean.

But it's also

My heart's in the Hielands, my heart is not here ;  
My heart's in the Hielands a-chasing the deer.

If we now give a turn to the kaleidoscope, the chance-medley which issues so brilliantly at the Tower in 1715 is reproduced, with modifications, in 1815 at the Paris Conciergerie. The Comtesse Lavalette, we may be moderately sure, had never heard of Lady Nithisdale, but the plot of the French lady is curiously like that of her Scottish predecessor. Lavalette himself is the historian.<sup>1</sup> For his part in the return from Elba he had been condemned to death. Louis XVIII turned from the tears of the wife as George I from the pleadings of Lady Nithisdale; and there was no mercy in the Duchesse d'Angoulême. "Utterly worn out," says Lavalette, "she sank down on the stone steps of the palace, stayed there an hour, hoping against hope for entrance. Passers-by looked on her, not daring to show compassion. At last she left the palace, and returned heart-broken to me in prison." This was Tuesday evening, and Lavalette (who had been arrested on the 18th of June, 1815) had learned that he should die on Thursday morning. A scene in the Tower repeats itself. "My wife came to dine with me at six o'clock, and the moment we were alone she said, 'There is nothing more to hope for. We must make our own plan, and this is mine. At eight o'clock to-morrow night you will go from here dressed in clothes of mine. My cousin will accompany you to my sedan chair at the door, and in the chair you will be taken to the Rue des Saints-Pères,

<sup>1</sup> "Mémoires et Souvenirs." The book was published in three volumes in London, 1831.

where you will find M. Baudus waiting with a light carriage. He will drive at once to a place prepared for you, where you will remain till you can leave France in safety.' ”

Lavalette at first inclined to the petticoats as little as Nithisdale had done, but the wife again had her way. At five next evening she returned to the prison, her intelligent young daughter with her, and an old woman servant. She was garbed in merino, lined with fur, and had brought in a bag a black silk skirt. Dinner was served, Lavalette's last should the plot go ill. “We could not swallow a morsel ; we did not exchange a word.” At three-quarters after six Mme. de Lavalette struck the bell, and the valet Bonneville entered the room. The scheme of evasion was a far simpler one than Lady Nithisdale's, but identical at the centre, and Mme. de Lavalette had overlooked nothing. She took Bonneville aside, whispered a few words to him, and added aloud, “Be sure to have the porters ready, for I must leave very soon.” Then she summoned her husband to his toilet behind the screen. “While dressing me with wonderful quickness and skill, she ceased not to repeat, ‘Don't forget to stoop as you pass under the doors. Walk slowly through the outer chamber, as if grief had overcome you.’ In less than three minutes she had finished dressing me.”

Silently the little party advanced to the door ; then, as the bell was sounded for the warder, Mme. de Lavalette sprang behind the screen. When the warder opened the door, Lavalette passed out first, the daughter followed, and the old woman servant closed the march. On crossing the passage, “I found myself opposite to five gaolers, sitting, loung-

ing, standing, all along the way. I held my handkerchief to my eyes, and waited for my daughter. The child took me by the right arm, and the concierge, descending the steps from his room on the left, came towards me, and laid his hand upon my arm. 'You are leaving early, Madame,' he said. He seemed distressed, thinking, no doubt, that husband and wife had spoken their last adieus. They said afterwards that my daughter and I cried aloud, though we scarcely dared to breathe a sigh. . . . There are twelve steps to mount before you reach the court, but the guard of gendarmes stands at the foot of them. Some twenty soldiers, their officer heading them, were there to see Madame de Lavalette go by. I got to the last step, and here was the sedan chair." Yes, but where were the chairmen? Ten mortal minutes Lavalette sat in the sedan chair, his eyes fixed on the gun of the sentry a few paces off, "as those of a serpent on its prey." Then came the breathless Bonneville, who had been scouring the streets for porters. "At last I was lifted. Across the great court went the chair, and to the right we turned on issuing. In this direction we proceeded to the Quai des Orfèvres, over against the tiny Rue du Harlay. There the chair stopped, the door opened, and my good Baudus, offering his arm, said, 'You know, Madame, you have now your visit to the President.' As I stepped out, he motioned me to a gig waiting hard by in the dusky little street. Into this I leapt, and away went the horse at a hand-gallop." A glance over his shoulder, and he saw his daughter Josephine watching from the quay, "praying to God with all her soul." What comes after in the flight is not too difficult; and by and by, in English uniform, Lavalette is conducted

by General Wilson (the very gallant would-be deliverer of Marshal Ney) to the kindly soil of Belgium.

Yes, indeed: "Cherchez la femme," or, better, the sweet line of Burns:

Oh whistle, an' I'll come tae ye, my lad!

is a sound motto on this quest. The prisoner of war, in whose misfortunes there is often a direct romantic appeal, is successful in putting what Ireland calls the *comether*, the glamour of the eye, on sympathetic ladies of his neighbourhood. We have seen how happily it fared with Duguay-Trouin in the hands of a belle of Plymouth. Dr. T. J. Walker<sup>1</sup> cites from a work which I have failed to discover an incident as picturesque as any of its kind:

"Five hundred prisoners were confined in a building on Yoldon Hill, near Pembroke, and, as was the custom, they were allowed to eke out the very meagre allowance voted for their subsistence, by the sale of toys, which they carved out of wood and bone. Two Pembroke lasses were employed in bringing the odds and ends requisite for this work, and in carrying away refuse from the prison. These girls, not having the law of nations or the high policy of Europe before their eyes, dared to fall in love with two of the Frenchmen, and formed a desperate resolve not only to rescue their lovers, but the whole of the prisoners in the same ward, one hundred in number. It was impossible to smuggle any tools into the prison, but a shin of horse beef seemed harmless in the eyes of a Pembroke Cerberus. With the bone extracted from this delicacy the Frenchmen undermined the walls, the faithful girls carrying off the soil in their refuse buckets. When

<sup>1</sup> "The Dépôt for Prisoners of War at Norman Cross, Huntingdonshire, 1796 to 1816."

the subway was complete, the lasses watched until some vessel should arrive. At length a sloop came in loaded with a consignment of culm for Stackpole. That night the liberated men made their way down to the water, seized the sloop, and bound the crew hand and foot, but unfortunately the vessel was high and dry, and it was found impossible to get her off. Alongside was a small yacht belonging to Lord Cawdor which they managed to launch. This would not take them all ; but the two women and twenty-five men got on board, taking with them the compass, water-casks, and provisions from the sloop. In the morning there was a great hue and cry. Dr. Mansel, a leading man in Pembroke, posted handbills over the whole county, offering 500 guineas for the recovery of these two traitorous women, alive or dead. In a few days the stern of the yacht and other wreckage being picked up, the patriotic party were satisfied that the vengeance of Heaven had overtaken the traitors. They were, however, mistaken, for the Frenchmen captured a sloop laden with corn, and abandoning the yacht, compelled the crew to carry them to France. When they were safe, it is pleasant to read that the commissary and engineer married the girls. During the short peace, the engineer and his wife returned to Pembroke and told their story ; they then went to Merthyr and obtained employment in the mines, but on the renewal of hostilities went back to France, where it is to be hoped they lived happily ever afterwards."

Here perhaps, so wide a field lying forward of us, I should leave this broken picture of the woman as the provident and conspiring angel of the man in his state of outlawry. It is a phase of the subject

harder to quit than it would be easy to pursue; for, since Rahab hides the spies on the roof of her house among the stalks of flax, until a pretty girl unknown seeks the rescue of an interesting prisoner of the Boers (the story, innocent and charming, is unconfirmed), the woman has been incomparably the best and cleverest and most self-abandoned ally of the man on the run for life. Is it a woman who lays Troy in ashes, betrays the Capitol, loses Mark Antony the world? It is a thousand women who laugh at the locks of prison for a husband, a lover, or a friend.

#### IV. THE WONDER-GIRL OF SIBERIA

But let us see a woman, a young Russian woman—she is but thirty or so to-day—figuring as heroine in two of the boldest escapes from Siberia. Of the pains of transportation to this region we have few authentic records (Dostoievsky's tragic novel is in essence a masterpiece of history), and the complete narrative of a woman in this situation is a piece of writing apart from the rest of literature. The simple pages, with never a touch of rhetoric, in which Marie Sukloff describes the progress of her party of convicts from Odessa prison to the frozen depths of Asiatic Russia—herded in filthy trains, cold and hungry in verminous wayside prisons, driven on foot through the blizzard—carry the reader out of himself, numbing and enthralling him. The whole story has the Russian touch.<sup>1</sup>

On the final stage of the journey the young convict (she was just sixteen, and had been in charge of a little revolutionary press at Kishinev) was separ-

<sup>1</sup> "The Life Story of a Russian Exile." By Marie Sukloff. Translated by Gregory Yarros.

ated from her companions and carried alone to the hamlet of Aleksandrovs koye. The peasant women of the place gathered round her. "Poor girl, poor girl!" said they. "Your parents must have shed bitter tears when you were taken from them in such tender years." When they found that she could read, the people brought letters from their soldier-men in Manchuria, and begged her to write for them. In this hamlet were no prison walls; but, says Marie Sukloff, "the purposeless life in a remote Siberian village seemed to me worse than a prison." Soon she began to whisper to herself, "You must escape, you must escape from here." No woman, I believe, had ever escaped from Siberia.

She obtained permission to go for a few days to the town of Kansk. At Kansk she was told, "There are only six politicals here, and they are all starving." From Kansk she made her way to Irkutsk, and here an old revolutionist furnished her with a hundred roubles and a passport, in which she was described as a merchant's daughter. With these treasures the exile returned to Aleksandrovs koye, as she had promised to do.

In the neighbouring village of Ribinskoye were the Orloffs, prisoners like herself for life, with whom she had made most of the journey from Odessa. The Orloffs also were pining for freedom, but did not know what to do with their little son. Said Marie: "Listen. I will take your child with me, and you will escape later. The police will look for me *alone*, and for you *with a child*, and this change of parts will save us all."

In a few hours the affair was settled. Marie was to take the little Orloff to his grandparents at Vilna; and the next night she started with him. The hunt,



of course, was soon afoot ; but, with her tiny companion beside her, the fugitive sped onward unsuspected. A flight through the forest brought them to Krasnoyarsk, and from this point it was necessary to take train to Vilna. The child again proved the best protection. "The spies who swarmed at every big station did not pay the least attention to me." The blessing was in due time deposited with his grandparents ; and the young Nihilist whose safety he had ensured, after a hurried visit to father and mother, resumed her travels, and arrived in Switzerland.

At Geneva were living the leaders of the Russian "fighting league" ; and to them Marie Sukloff, now a resolved terrorist, betook herself. She left Geneva with a mission to assassinate General Trepov. This gentleman was inaccessible (if memory serves me, he was afterwards shot by Vera Sassulitch) ; and next on the black list of the league stood General Kleigels. This second mission also failed. Kleigels, doubtless warned, always drove abroad with his wife and son ; and "it was no part of our policy to shed the innocent blood of women and children." Victims, however, were seldom to seek ; and the league now devoted to death Governor Khvostoff, a famous satrap of Tchernigoff.

"I treasured," says Marie Sukloff, "the names of those who had been shot or flogged to death by him. I read and reread for the thousandth time the simple narratives of the peasants about his terrible crimes, and my heart bled for them. Hopefully I looked in the direction of the shelf on which the bomb lay."

Bomb in hand, one snowy New Year's afternoon, she awaited Khvostoff on a bridge—as Sophy

Perovskaya had tarried for a quarry more august. When the governor's carriage drew level with her, she flung the missile through the window—and was herself nearly flung into eternity by the explosion. A youth of eighteen found her lying in the snow in the dark, with blood frozen on her hands and face, and attempted a rescue in a sleigh. All night he drove her aimlessly at full speed, and in the morning the sleigh was stopped by soldiers and police.

The chief prisoner had no thought of denying her crime, but neither her captors nor her judges knew who she was; and at the close of her trial at midnight the award of the court was, “ ‘Unknown’ is sentenced to death by hanging.” She tells us how she lay six days in her cell “ in a state of exaltation,” and every evening “ I again prepared for death, and waited.” On the seventh day the sentence of the judges was commuted; and once again (and again “ for life ”) Marie Sukloff set forth for Siberia.

One drab twelvemonth succeeds to another; and in the summer of 1910 we see Marie Sukloff in a cell of Irkutsk prison, waiting for a surgical operation at the hands of a drunken prison doctor. Weak from this, she arose from her mattress with a new plan of escape. Beyond the gates of this gaol “ there were neither the black forests of Akatui nor the bare mountains of Maltzev.” She had procured a boy's costume, and secreted it beneath her pillow; and in this, her convict's cloak concealing it, Miss Marie made a dash through the prison gate, braving the bullets of guards within and without, and jumped into the carriage held in readiness by friends at a corner of the street.

All this is but a presage or foreshow of freedom; the starting-point in a history of trials, concealments,

disguises, flights by land and ocean, “hair-breadth ‘scapes,”—a history unmatched of its kind, and fit for the pen of a Defoe, for it is pure realism throughout. Readers of De Quincey will recall his inimitable tale of “The Spanish Military Nun.” Kate is a jewel, but I would pit against her the slender peasant girl of Russia, who has but just been lifted from the operating-table. The modernity of the setting lends to the whole adventure a piquancy. The very first scene might be a chapter of Stevenson’s “New Arabian Nights.” The bullets of the guards have scarcely ceased pattering around her when the carriage into which she has flung herself stops “in front of a sumptuous residence, shaded by a row of trees.” The fugitive makes a dash at the bell. An old lackey with a lifeless face opens the door. Marie does not know the lackey and the lackey does not know Marie. She has apparently been driven to the wrong house. But she has a quick change of clothes to effect, and here it must be managed. The aged flunkey, dumb with fright, leads her upstairs; opens wardrobes and closets; and somehow the fugitive sheds her boy’s habiliments and resumes her own sex. Speechless to the last, the old man conducts her to a back door, and she slips out into the hostile streets of Irkutsk.

Then take the scene of the dinner-party in another house of the same city on the same evening. Marie has encountered in the street a man with whose address she had been furnished. He drives her to the residence of a wealthy lady in secret sympathy with the “politicals.” This lady—a total stranger—at once consents to receive the refugee as a waiting-maid. That very night Marie had to carry soup into the dining-room, filled with guests, “most of whom

were high Government officials." Her picture was in the evening papers; and the son of the house, who had brought one home, instantly recognised the new waitress. Of such tense and throbbing moments is the history woven.

In the garb of a Sister of Mercy (a revolver hidden in the folds of her robe), she starts by train for the Manchurian and Chinese borders; reaches Manchuria, and from here, strangest scene of all, travels onward, dressed as a bride for her honeymoon, in the society of another brave comrade, who has voluntarily risked the pose of bridegroom. At Genoa the prodigious flight was accomplished.

Has any other prisoner of Marie Sukloff's sex escaped from Siberia? Has any other prisoner of either sex escaped twice? It is a bewildering feat, the highest and most extravagant recorded.

#### V. GREAT MOMENTS

In Stevenson's exquisite "Gossip on Romance"<sup>1</sup> is this exquisite passage:

"The threads of a story come from time to time together and make a picture in the web; the characters fall from time to time into some attitude to each other or to nature, which stamps the story home like an illustration. Crusoe recoiling from the footprint, Achilles shouting over against the Trojans, Ulysses bending the great bow, Christian running with his fingers in his ears, these are each culminating moments in the legend, and each has been printed on the mind's eye for ever."

In every fine escape there is some signal and memorable moment, though it is not always, and

<sup>1</sup> R. L. Stevenson, "Memories and Portraits."

need not be, the culminating one of the adventure. There remained a good deal for Louis Napoleon to do while he was crossing the courtyard of the prison of Ham with the plank on his shoulder; but I think of him always at this crisis as stooping to pick up under the eyes of the sentries the broken pieces of the pipe that he has dropped. In front of Casanova (is the story credible?), when he had ascended from his cell in the "Piombi," lay a myriad perplexities; but for the reader rightly attuned he is still astride the leaden roof, slippery with fog, in the darkness of midnight, not knowing if a step will pitch him headlong. I forget for an instant the stifling toils of Colonel Rose in the tunnel like a grave under Libby, when I see him, surprised one evening and rushing up to his chamber, seated at his table there and feigning a doze over his pipe, while the guard goes the round. Amid the escapes of youth (a scanty show, of course), we should be on tenterhooks until we know that the little Count of Flanders, his hawk upon his wrist, has given the slip to the pursuit, and galloped clean into France. Donat O'Brien again and again sends a challenge to his life, but in my dreams he is poised eternally on the ramparts of Bitche, holding between his hands a rope that a monkey might hesitate to climb. Amid the many alarms overtaking Trenck in his subterranean workings, I watch him one night stealing back through the sand of the gallery on the sudden approach of the warders with their lanterns. There are two high moments in the escape of Grotius packed into the trunk. The first is when the maid-servant in charge of the trunk, which is on its way by canal to Gorcum, wrangles over it at the landing-place, and insists on its being placed in a hand-

barrow. The second is when Grotius, wheeled in his trunk to the house of David Dazelaër, leaves it by a back door in the dress of a mason. That is an uncommon fix of Count Arrivabene and his friends, when, flying from the Austrian police in 1862, after three days and three nights in a labyrinth of valleys, they take shelter half dead at an inn, and see hanging up by the kitchen fire the wet clothes of the gendarmes who have been following them. At one of the conjunctures of Charles Edward's flight we have no thought but as to the figure he will cut and the fate he will meet in the petticoats of Betty the maid.

Can we realise Bucquoy's situation, standing before the door through which he has burned a hole for escape in For-l'Évêque? There is one realistic touch in the position of the Empress Eugénie, thrust into a hackney cab in the centre of a Paris that was or was not on the point of revolt. Every step of the two flights of Marie Sukloff is a doubt on which the reader hangs a hope; and, to pick yet another modern instance, there is Mr. Winston Churchill, an escaping prisoner in the Boer war, at large on the veldt one midnight, clutching at and swinging himself into a passing train, that goes he knows not whither. In all the great escapes, it is a handful of strong life that we are contemplating; and in these adventures there is a medicine for character that very few of the estates of man or woman are capable of yielding.

Still, there are prisoners whom posterity congratulates in that they have lacked ambition to climb the wall. Bunyan, flung into Bedford Gaol, and held there (with intervals of doubtful and precarious liberty) for twelve years, is better engaged on his "Pilgrim's Progress" than in sharpening file or

crowbar. Cervantes, ignominiously confined in the "House of Medrano" in Argamasilla, is better engaged in projecting his "Don Quixote" (it is now pretty certain that he wrote no part of it there) than in burrowing his way through the cellar. Raleigh in the Tower is largely concerned to get on with his "History of the World." Boetius, Theodoric's prisoner at Ticinum (Pavia), would perhaps not have troubled himself to quit his dungeon had the door been opened for him. He had his "De Consolatione Philosophiæ" to pen; and, like some of Louis XIV's literary prisoners in the Bastille and Vincennes, found the cell a rather stimulating workshop. It was in the Dungeon of Vincennes that Mirabeau wrote his flaming "Lettres de Cachet," which did its part in urging France to the Revolution. Of Grotius, whom Lord Acton honours as the founder of the study of real political science, it has been stated that he wrote in prison his pregnant commentaries on the Scriptures. He had not the time, I think, to do this; but his days and nights in Louvenstein were wholly studious, and it is quite unlikely that he would ever have confided himself to a trunk had his wife not suggested and coaxed him to the plan.

#### VI. ESCAPES ALWAYS RARE, AND WHY NOW-ADAYS RARER THAN EVER?

But when a few select and exceptional cases are disposed of, cases in which we should not instinctively hunt for romances of escape, we have the slightly surprising spectacle of some thousands of prisoners of every kind—at any given period and in almost any given country—who, if they do not

exactly contain their souls in patience, submit at least to a fate that is always tedious and that is or often has been hideous. Imprisonment has been of all sorts. The pestilential Newgate of the eighteenth century (testimonies of the driest—reports of Commissions, and so forth—clinch every detail of the picture in Fielding's "Amelia") was a rollicking hotel for the trull, the highwayman, the murderer, the half-pay captain, and the debtor, till the day came when the Governor had milked them dry. There were supper-parties, ladies enlivening them, in the Dungeon of Vincennes. From the Bastille itself issues the history of one of the rare authentic amours of prison, that of Marguerite Delaunay and the gentleman (afterwards so faithless) who lodged in the opposite chamber. In the prison of the Inquisition in Venice, as late as the eighteenth century, it was possible to lie for years in the "Pozzi," or "Wells," with feet in the water or on a ledge just above it, and the rats disputing the rations. The prisoner of war, in our hulks and at Norman Cross, and in France at Verdun and at Bitche, has had every variety of entertainment; from comfort in apartments for the officer on parole to semi-starvation of the common soldier and sailor.

But let the manner of imprisonment be what it may: in a dark subterranean cavern with vermin for company; in a fortress cell, chained to floor or wall; in a black hole whence the victim was removed to madhouse or tomb; in the galleys under the lash of the overseer; in the chain-gangs of New South Wales, under the knotted whip of the convict scourger; in Port Macquarie, Van Diemen's Land, where, says Marcus Clarke,<sup>1</sup> life was one continual

<sup>1</sup> "Stories of Australia in the Early Days."



agony, and where a prisoner would sometimes consent to be murdered by his fellow, so that the first might win freedom by knife or bludgeon, and the second by the hangman's cord; in a loft of old Dartmoor in the early nineteenth century, where prisoners of war lived stark naked and fed on offal; in a "Little Ease" chamber of the ancient Paris Châtelet, where one might neither stand erect nor lie at full length; laced in a canvas jacket until the internal organs are crushed out of place;<sup>1</sup> in the Bastille, where prisoners of means could live not uncomfortably;<sup>2</sup> in Vincennes, where in the eighteenth century existence could be very tolerable; in any of the prisons visited by John Howard (of which the most were shocking); in unreformed Newgate, where, according to his purse, the prisoner might reel to bed or go there empty; or in any modern penal institution of our own, where penance, ceasing to be savage, has turned to drabness and dreariness and all unprofitableness—it matters not, I say, what modes of imprisonment we have, or have had: escape is of the very rarest.

So far, however, as our own prisons of to-day are concerned, the situation of the prisoner in them has undergone a great and complete transformation. Some years ago, on a fiery afternoon of July, I was going over Portland Prison with the Governor. We were looking down into the hospital yard, in which, under a warder's eye, the convict orderly was taking his constitutional. Round and round the yard he tramped, as briskly as a tourist with his knapsack,

<sup>1</sup> Donald Lowrie, "My Life in Prison" (an American record. Lowrie's statements are confirmed by another American work, "Crime and Criminals, by the Prison Reform League.")

<sup>2</sup> Even Latude, as he tells us, was allowed seven bottles of wine a week.

and threw up at the Governor a soft and smiling eye. The man wore on his sleeve the crimson "L" which means penal servitude for life. The Governor did not quite remember how long this prisoner had been with him ; eight or nine years perhaps, out of the fourteen or fifteen he had already served. There were in Portland that day some twelve hundred convicts, and in the quarries and workshops I had noted others with the "L" upon the right sleeve.

There are seldom fewer than three thousand men in the several convict gaols, and in and out of the local prisons is an annual flow of about two hundred thousand.

Our newer prisons are somewhat slightly built. A Portland or Dartmoor of this day, a Wormwood Scrubbs, a Brixton, or a Wandsworth, stands no comparison in the article of strength with a Newgate, a Bastille, a Magdeburg, or a Bitch. But escapes from these places are uncommon, exceedingly uncommon. Why should it be harder to get out of Portland or Wormwood Scrubbs than it was to get out of any old German or Austrian prison, or any prison of the French monarchy ? Our own criminals of these days have well-nigh eschewed prison-breaking. They spend their evenings on petitions to a Home Secretary for the liberty they will not often seek by any other means.

The common character of men is not heroic ; and the prisoner whose heels begin to itch must ask himself what he can do, what endure, and just how much he is prepared to risk for liberty. There is scarcely such a thing as a downright simple escape. I will not say there is no such thing, so great is or has been the variety in the accidents of imprisonment ; but the felicitous escape that has a look of im-

promptu is never a blind dash for liberty. When Marie Sukloff ducks beneath the prison gate in Siberia she is wearing boy's clothes under her cloak and knows that a carriage is waiting for her. When Prince Kropotkin flings off his dressing-gown in the hospital yard he is doing what he has practised over and over again in his cell, and he does it because the violinist hidden in the grey house opposite is scraping his bow like a demon as the signal for the start, and a thoroughbred horse is harnessed to a drosky, and friends are at their posts the whole length of the street beyond. When the quick-witted Cochot, a prisoner of the *Bagne*, stole off one morning and heard the alarm-guns firing around him, he laughed at them. Cochot knew his game. He had remembered that on the King's birthday salutes were fired in the harbour ; for that day he had tarried ; and as the guns of the *Bagne* and the guns for His Majesty played one and the same tune, Cochot, unnoticed, went quietly trotting through the fields. But consider now an attempt that really is impromptu or nothing. That amusing old burglar, “ Archie ” (afterwards for many years in the prison service of the Salvation Army), whose adventures Mr. Charles Morley has so delightfully recounted, finding a warder's set of oilskins in a shed, promptly put them on, and was taking his way out of prison. The warder who arrested him tickled “ Archie's ” fancy with the remark that oilskins and a sou'-wester were not quite the ideal wear for a roasting day at Portland.

The prisoner of the itching heel does well if he begins by persuading himself that there are no easy escapes ; and unless the plan of the sudden rush has something behind as well as something ahead, it is

probably a foolish one. An illustration of the something behind is Louis Napoleon's choice of a day when the Governor of Ham, being a little indisposed, will be an hour or two late on his morning's round. The something ahead in this case is the practical certainty that the Prince's valet, Thélin, will be on the high road with the cab hired in the town by him the night before. The escape so simple seeming that we begin by suspecting the help or connivance of a gaoler has its origin in a flash of inspiration, takes days or weeks to prepare, and is consummated in one happy instant because thought has been taken for every conceivable mischance.

But the heel continues to itch. Liberty I must have. What is my plan? Is it feasible? If I must throw it aside, can I invent another? The sudden escapes are somewhat rare: what toil, what danger, am I willing to court? In the most artistic of the narratives of prisoners who have hewed their way through stone and soil we may fancy a touch of exaggeration here, a bit of embroidery there, a lie or two for the hero's enhancement and the reader's entertainment. The brilliant Casanova, plunging into his "Memoirs," sticks at nothing that shall amaze or amuse his audience. Baron Trenck, who seems always within three fingers of madness, and also, like Miss Squeers, to be "screaming out loud all the time I am writing this," has been tripped up by Carlyle, and escapes criticism at his most sensational points merely because nothing has been pigeon-holed against him—as almost everything has been pigeon-holed against Latude. But the prisoner with the itching heel must take note of Casanova hanging between sky and earth, and of Trenck, naked and chained to the wall, urging, a

few inches at a stretch, a passage through the cell intended for his tomb.

A task like Trenck's, common in the legends of its class, brings up the questions, what tools the prisoner can find or beg or hire, what art he can employ in using and secreting them, and how far his strength and temperament will carry him in immense labour under conditions always unusual, always exacting, and for the most part unwholesome. A push, a thrust, a tap may betray him ; he is working with his nerves as much as with his muscles. To the bare instruments of the prison-breaker a whole chapter could go. The adept burglar of these days, with his keys, his needles, his blow-pipe, and the rest of his paraphernalia, asks nothing but secrecy and time. The prisoner, his ear straining for the gaoler's footfall, is doing his business with half the blade of a penknife, an old file, a broken bayonet, a gimlet, a saw made out of a kitchen carver, a fragment of sword, a few twisted wires, a crowbar wrenched from a window and pointed by rubbing on the floor or wall ; and when his toil of the day or night is ended he has to conceal his instrument or instruments by any means short of swallowing them. In no situation of civil life can we match the crisis of Colonel Rose during his last quarter of an hour in the tunnel under Libby Prison ; of Latude and his companion in the moat of the Bastille ; of Benvenuto Cellini at work on the iron plates of his door ; of Captain Haldane and his two companions for weeks under the flooring of the Model School in Pretoria,—and each of these adventures carries us back to a story of the successful use of implements fitter for a cave man than for a prison-breaker.

It is from Pretoria that Mr. Winston Churchill, preceding Captain Haldane by some weeks, makes his handsome elopement as a prisoner of war. In his own narrative there is an affecting passage on the prisoner's fret and ache for liberty ; and he goes on to tell us, I think, how he devised and entered on his own scheme of escape. In this yearning the schemes of the great flights are born, but it is not one prisoner in thousands who has grit enough to bring them to the test. The odd man in the crowd of undistinguished prisoners, lying now in Newgate, now in the Bastille, now in Magdeburg, now in Siberia, now in a keep of the Vosges, and now in a Staats School of Dutch Africa, bethinks him day and night of liberty, and is willing at any price to taste of that again before he tastes of death. It is then that we get a picture of the epic effort and the epic flight, a gem of adventure equal to all but the best in the supreme trial of war itself. Indeed, it is the spirit bred in experience of war that gives quality to so many of these performances. Our own soldier is trained, not only to rely on himself at a pinch, but to bear fatigue, privation, and danger with a lively heart and a permanent notion that scrapes of life and death are things he is sure to get out of. The soldier or sailor, prisoner of war, putting in his blow for the liberty that the lazy one sits down to wait for, risks neck or limb over a rampart, lies like a wild animal in a cave by day and steals out at night, flounders in the dark through all weathers and over every kind of country, chances a knock at the door of a cottage for a draught of water, some broken meats, or a little glow of fire in his bosom—and in a Casious hour gets at last across the frontier.

Trenten Sir Charles Monro was setting out in

October last to direct our somewhat tangled affairs in the Near East, a writer in the Press remarked of him:

“ He knows his mind right through ; he has always thought out every possibility beforehand ; he is never hurried, never flustered, never taken by surprise. He is prepared for as many sorts of failure as there are chances of success, and he has the precise professional knowledge to estimate the breaking strain on the weak links of his material.”<sup>1</sup>

These are among the virtues of the great prison-breakers, and it should surprise us little that of such adventurers the number is always few.

Amid the population of prisons, where the general human stuff is inevitably poor, we shall very rarely meet them ; but there are reasons definite and special why escapes from these places are nowadays uncommon.

If, then, evasions on the great scale have come to be of quite exceptional occurrence, curiosities of history almost, I must first repeat that they have not at any time been frequent, and must next remark, with all the emphasis possible, that in our modern prisons—weaker in most respects than the ancient ones—discipline and a perfected scheme of surveillance have dispensed with the characteristic defences of the past. The great romantic flights lie more or less beyond the limits of the attainable. System, with lesser bolts and thinner walls, and lower ramparts does what the *want* of system, with triple doors and cells three or five feet thick, and outer walls and towers fifty to a hundred feet in height, was often quite powerless to effect. The old prisons were built like fortresses, but strength of masonry is no longer the prime consideration.

<sup>1</sup> “ Observer,” October 24, 1915.

“Let us take the matter a little in detail.<sup>1</sup> You can no longer rely upon the unwitting aid of a lunatic governor such as Benvenuto Cellini had to deal with in the Castle of St. Angelo, in Rome. You cannot, apparently, buy the direct assistance of a warder in so big an affair as an attempted flight, for it is evident that the warders have very little part in these enterprises. You cannot spend days, weeks, or months, like a Trenck or a Latude, in digging or burrowing out of your cell, for you are never left alone. You cannot, like a Casanova, convey to a confederate a handy iron tool in a dish of macaroni, because nothing bigger than a 6in. loaf is served for dinner. You cannot, like Louis Napoleon, walk out of prison disguised as a carpenter, because no hired carpenters are allowed within the walls. You cannot change dress with a visitor, because the friend who is allowed to visit you stands in one cage and you in another cage, and the warder sits in the space between. You cannot very well contrive out of paper a costume in imitation of a visiting inspector’s—a trick known to the old hands of the *bagnes*—for your Bible and hymn-book and library book would scarcely furnish the material. You cannot—another device of the *bagnes*—build a hut or hole in the yards or outlying works, in which to lie *perdu* till the safe moment; for not a spot of the ground is left unexamined by the warders.”

Indeed, I may reduce to an almost negative quantity the chances of the prison-breaker of these days. The iron method of the modern convict prison, exact and precise in every detail, limits and constrains him at every turn. The principle of the

<sup>1</sup> I am here borrowing a paragraph of my own from a chapter I contributed to “London Stories” (Wilfred Whitten, Ed.).



prison rule of our day (and the small number of escapes shows how well it works) is, that the warder in charge of a batch of prisoners knows where each member of the party is, and what he is doing, at every hour of the day and night. Nothing is left to chance. If the prisoner is allowed to quit his section or party for a minute, a warder must accompany him.

Thus, as the order is established to-day—and this military system, quite useless as a means of reform, has been years in the making—the convict's best chance of escape is the almost hopeless one of sudden flight. In the *bagnes*, where the art of prison-breaking touched perfection, the unpremeditated burst from the docks, the timber-yard, or the guard-room, had no place in the unwritten rules of "*évasions*." It was the desperate device of the tyro, it was despised, and it almost always failed. To-day it fails as surely, but the convict has little other hope.<sup>1</sup>

If he does get out, it is all but sure as fate that he will presently be recaptured (hence it is quite unnecessary to shoot him), for the convict in his first hour of liberty always falls to blundering. He is thief, burglar, or forger—a criminal, that is to say, whose trade is in towns. Freed, by some happy stroke, in the wilds of Dartmoor, he is hopelessly astray. He sneaks into the nearest house, to steal a coat to cover his prison clothes, and then makes straight for the nearest town. If he reaches it, he

<sup>1</sup> Within half a century, how many escapes have there been from Portland? About five-and-forty years ago a convict from this prison, flying down the long slope to the Chesil Beach, was shot through the back by a sentinel of the military guard. At Dartmoor, men working beyond the walls sometimes get away for a while under cover of a sudden fog. In 1892 one William Bremner, blacksmith and carpenter by trade, made a remarkable escape from Dundee prison. Such achievements are rare enough to be very long remembered.

makes straight for the docks or the thieves' quarter, where the police are on the watch for him. These town-bred criminals are not up to their calling! The "Compleat Burglar," were such a work on sale, would instruct the prison-breaker in all that he at present lacks. To escape is difficult; to avoid being retaken is twice as difficult. But, in such a tract as Dartmoor, if one knew only the simplest arts of the poacher, how easy it should be to maintain life in comfort, without forcing a house to steal a coat, on one's progress to the nearest town, where the police, duly warned, are in waiting! The town-bred burglar, falling back on his manual, would take up the life of the countryman. He would snare rabbits, kill sheep, and tickle in the streams for trout. He would know how to live in security and at ease within gunshot of the prison. But, since he does *not* know this, and runs inevitably into the hands of the police, what end is served by shooting him on sight?

#### VII. EXCEPTIONAL CONDITIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: THE CONDITIONS OF SHEPPARD, LATUDE, AND TRENCK

Prisoners were not more prone to escape in the past than they are in our own day. All older generations of prison-breakers had, however, one great relative advantage: the watch was on the whole indifferently kept. In the cases even of important prisoners of State, concerning whom the instructions to gaolers and sentries were precise and stringent, we have curious revelations of laxity and venality; and on every hand we note the absence of that methodised and unremitted vigilance which salts

the tail of the gaol-bird. It is, therefore, to these less sophisticated days of the past, before the administration of prison has been erected into an art, that we must turn for examples of escape in the great manner. With one such example the Newgate Calendar is enriched.

A most unattractive youth, Jack Sheppard, but an eminent demolisher of prison, and his fame has been bruited up through continents. In the cell of the condemned in Newgate, at the age of twenty-two, a slender pale little fellow of about Napoleon's inches, he sat for his picture to the great Sir James Thornhill. Two hundred thousand people followed him to Tyburn on the 16th of November, 1724, and in some spot beneath the National Gallery his dust mingles with that of the philanthropic Heriot. The Press competed with the chapmen to exploit him, and the pulpit outdid itself, parsons entreating "their flocks to emulate him, in a spiritual sense, by mounting the chimney of hope to the leads of divine meditation." The stage was quick to perceive in him a subject not caviare to the general. "The 'Harlequin Sheppard,' by John Thurmond, was produced at Drury Lane in December, 1724; and the 'Prison-Breaker,' written for Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1725, was altered for Bartholomew Fair as the 'Quakers' Opera' in 1728." Later he was canonised in burlesque; Mrs. Keeley personating him for one generation, Miss Nellie Farren for another. Fiction could scarcely overlook him; and Ainsworth's "Jack Sheppard," illustrated by Cruikshank at his best, is a careful and competent specimen of the picaresque. Quite as diligent have the biographers been. To Defoe is attributed the "Narrative of all the Robberies, Escapes, etc., of John

Sheppard . . . written by himself during his confinement in the Middle Stone Room, 1724." This, in 1725, was adapted in Amsterdam. Forty years later a German account appeared at Leipsic; and from Sydney, New South Wales, in 1845, yet another history was issued. My list is in no sense exhaustive.

Lithe, sinewy, and of an extraordinarily active habit, Sheppard owned an hereditary and acquired skill in implements. His father (an upright Spital-fields man), grandfather, and great-grandfather had been carpenters; and to the family trade he himself was at one time apprenticed in Wych Street. In the crimes of Sheppard there is "no d——d nonsense" of artistry. He was a highwayman, if the reader pleases; but among all the swaggerers and brag-garts of the road, from Dick Turpin (who did *not* ride to York) to William Nevison, *alias* "Swift Nick" (who most probably *did*), a genuine artist in the mask is a phoenix for rarity; and on the whole, perhaps, the unqualified success of that "Beggars' Opera" which "made Gay rich and Rich<sup>1</sup> gay" is rather to be wondered at. Sheppard, if highwayman, was also sneak, thief, and footpad; abstracting here a watch, there a silver spoon, and anon a roll of cloth. As became a sprig of "the Lane," he had a pair of doxies, "Edgeworth Bess" (Elizabeth Lion, or Lyon) and "Poll Maggott," of whose talents he availed himself in cracking both crib and prison. His pal was Joseph Blake ("Blueskin"); and towards the close of his brief, volcanic day, when, as he is reported to have said, "I took to robbing almost everyone that stood in my way," he had the mishap either to frighten or fall foul of Jonathan Wild.

<sup>1</sup> The producer of the piece at Covent Garden, January 29, 1728.

Certain dates and events in this career are conjectural, and sundry texts at variance. In "May, 1723," says one writer, "at the close of 1723," says another, he was had on a warrant to St. Clement's Round-house, whether as a runaway 'prentice, or on a charge of picking pockets. In the spring of the following year, 1724, he is lodged in St. Giles's Round-house, from which it is said "he skilfully made his escape." The truer story is, I think, that at the St. Giles's lock-up he was visited by Bess, who was detained on suspicion, and the pair were committed to Newgate; for here, at the "Stone Jug," in the month of May, sharing a chamber as man and wife,<sup>1</sup> they certainly were; and this is the theatre of his first signal flight.

Friends from "the Lane" looked in on Jack and the lady—and left a useful present of a file. On the morning of Whit Monday, May 25th, 1724, "having filed off his fetters, he made a breach in the wall, and took an iron bar and a large wooden one out of the window; then, having twenty-five feet to descend, he tied some blankets and sheets together, and fixing them to a remaining bar in the window, Bess ventured, and he followed." In the prison yard they had a wall of twenty-two feet to surmount, but the bolts of the main gate gave them footing, and over they went. It was a very creditable first disappearance.

In July, after a carnival of thefts, robberies, and burglaries, embracing almost every day of the early summer, he is seized on what may be suspected as an information of Jonathan Wild's, and we find him in Newgate under sen-

<sup>1</sup> An amusing, risky scene in Fielding's "Amelia" shows how easily this could be compassed.

tence of death. He has his files, of course (no authority tells us how he got them, but there was neither mystery nor difficulty about this in the Newgate under notice); and the provident eye of the thief has measured his surroundings. Bess and Poll Maggott were quickly on the scene. Sheppard contrived, or was allowed, to receive them within the lodge of the prison, hard by the gate itself. In a corner of the lodge turnkeys were at cards and drink. Behind the petticoats of the girls (their own necks in peril while they shielded him) he sliced off a spike of the gate;<sup>1</sup> they tugged him through it; and again he dives into the warrens of Drury Lane.

This was on the 5th of September in Sheppard's *annus mirabilis*, a year of wonders indeed with him, during which he is alternately holding up the town and reducing its greatest prison to pasteboard. After a spell in Northamptonshire he returned to London, and fell a prisoner to the turnkey Austin, to whom he had but just given the slip. "In spite of the heavy shackles with which he was now laden, he managed to secrete a small file [found in his Bible] and a complete set of tools [found in the rushes of his chair]. He was consequently removed to a stronger part of the prison, known as the 'Castle,' and chained with two ponderous iron staples to the floor."

Sheppard in Wormwood Scrubbs or Wandsworth at this day would not have been stapled to the floor, but he would have been under watch every hour of the twenty-four. In Newgate he seems to have been

<sup>1</sup> Of this episode there are two or three versions. One is to the effect that Sheppard had previously filed the spike in preparedness for the visit of Bess and the Maggot. The details of the escapes are neither always clear nor always credible. The proof, however, lies in the accomplishment.



Behind the petticoats of the girls . . . he sliced off a spike of the gate.





visited only once a day, and time was all he needed. "On Thursday, 15th October, about two in the afternoon, one of the keepers took him his dinner, and, as usual, examined his irons, found all fast, and so left him. He had hardly been gone an hour when Jack set to work. The first thing he did was to slip his hands out of the handcuffs, and then, with a crooked nail which he found on the floor he opened the great padlock that fastened his chain to the staple. Next he twisted asunder a small link of the chain between his legs, and, drawing up his feetlocks as high as he could, he made them fast with his garters."

Ascending the chimney, he was brought to a standstill by a great iron bar. Down he went again, and, from the outside, contrived to loosen and wrench out the bar, which was now a very serviceable implement. Getting into the "Red Room" overhead, he tore off the plate from the bolt of the door, forced the bolt with his hands, groped his way to a door in the passage beyond, reached the lock of this door by picking a hole in the wall, and thus—working now with a silent frenzy in the dark—attained to the chapel. From this spot he felt a path into an entry betwixt the chapel and the lower leads. The door of the entry was secured by one of the stoutest locks he had yet encountered, and he had no longer a glimmer to work by. "However, in half an hour, by the help of the great nail, the chapel spike, and the iron bar, he forced off the box of the lock and opened the door, which led him to another yet more difficult, for it was not only locked but barred and bolted. When he had tried in vain to make this lock and box give way, he wrenched the fillet from the main post of the door, and the box and staples

came off with it. . . . There was yet another door between him and the lower leads ; but, being bolted withinside, he opened it easily, and mounting to the top of it, he got over the wall and so to the upper leads."

There remained only the descent. This, however, was formidable. "There was a house adjoining, that of Mr. Bird, a turner, on to which he might drop ; but he deemed the leap too dangerous, and coolly resolved to retrace his steps to the prison chamber, from whence he had so laboriously issued, and secure his blanket. Having accomplished this risky service, he returned to the leads, made fast his blanket, slid down it, entered the turner's house by a garret window, and eventually, after some delay and no little danger of detection, got away down into the street."<sup>1</sup>

This is Sheppard's masterpiece. It merits its celebrity. At twenty-two he had twice escaped from Newgate, and his second flight lifts him high among the prison-breakers. Sensational in every detail, it stands examination by all contemporary records ; and this is in itself unusual, for the prison-breaker is veniably prone to brag. If his second and most illustrious effort is in no sense a typical one, the reason is that we can scarcely match it. Alone, unaided, and in a space of hours—half of them dark—the tiny wastrel of the slums equals a fable of Hercules.

From any prison, I think, Jack Sheppard might have broken ; and it takes not a great deal from his prowess that he is very indifferently guarded. But the point is important in the history of escapes.

<sup>1</sup> "Newgate Calendar" ; "Tyburn Calendar" ; Griffiths : "Chronicles of Newgate" ; Gordon : "The Old Bailey and Newgate." "Dic. Nat. Biog.," vol. 52.

The prisoner of these days is watched as a mouse by a cat ; but in all older days—it matters not the least at what period we begin—the prisoner who was resolute on flight could profit by a feeble, uncertain, and undeveloped system of supervision. This is, in its degree at least, an explanation of the classical escapes (the force of character, foresight, ingenuity, patience, and power of endurance of the prisoner being reckoned with) ; and it brings us to an episode, rather widely famed, in the chronicles of the Bastille.

What seemly and sedate old gentleman is this, taking the air of the Paris boulevards, stretching his legs at Madame Legros's drawing-room fire in a company of elegant and sympathetic ladies ? It is Henri Masers de Latude, who is no more Henri Masers de Latude than he is Prester John or the Cham of Tartary : the most exquisite and artistic rogue and charlatan in modern history, and half-hero of an escape from the Bastille that is celebrated above almost every other adventure of its kind.

To the pages of M. Funck-Brentano's " *Légendes et Archives de la Bastille* " <sup>1</sup> must the reader go who would view this career aright. " Few historical figures," he observes, " have taken a higher place in the popular imagination than Masers de Latude. " <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is an excellent authorised translation, " *Legends of the Bastille*," from the pen of Mr. George Maidment. Funck-Brentano succeeded François Ravaisson as keeper of the Archives of the Bastille in the Arsenal Library, Paris.

<sup>2</sup> Born March 23, 1725, at Montagnac in Languedoc. His mother was " a poor girl named Jeanneton Aubrespy." The child was baptised " under the name of Jean Henri, given him by his god-parents, Jean Bonheur and Jeanne Boudet. Surname the poor little creature had none, for he was the illegitimate child of a father unknown." Becoming an assistant surgeon in the army, " the young man ingeniously transformed his double forename into Jean Danry." It was during one of his sojourns in prison that he suddenly made himself a nobleman, taking the style and title of Masers de Latude.

That celebrated prisoner seems to have accumulated in his life of suffering all the wrongs that spring from an arbitrary government. The novelists and playwrights of the nineteenth century have made him a hero ; the poets have draped his woes in fine mourning robes, our greatest historians have burned for him the midnight oil ; numerous editions of his ' Memoirs ' have appeared in quick succession down to our own days. Even by his contemporaries he was regarded as a martyr, and posterity has not plucked the shining crown of martyrdom from his head, hoary with the snows of long captivity. His legend is the creature of his own unaided brain."

Some books, says the Scottish laureate, " are lies frae end to end." Of the thrice-celebrated " Memoirs " of Latude, M. Funck-Brentano observes : " The work is a tissue of calumnies and lies." In the Archives of the Bastille are preserved the documents relating to his case. " At the present time they are to be found dispersed among various libraries, at the Arsenal, at Carnavalet, at St. Petersburg." By his *dossier* Latude is brought to book.

In this place, however, our sole concern is the escape.<sup>1</sup> Allowance being made for the slackness of the watch, it is an affair of the most brilliant ; but not in future will Latude himself shine in it as the mighty figure the " Memoirs " have created for us. To his fellow-prisoner, Allègre, Latude assigns a secondary part in their doing. In the light of the Archives, Allègre stands out as the master spirit of the enterprise. A man of lively and cultivated mind, he had kept school at Marseilles ; and, as prisoners, fallen through a kind of greedy folly, the pair are

<sup>1</sup> Readers of the " Memoirs " will understand that the reference is to the *chief* escape.

brought together by similarity of misfortune. An insensate hope of exploiting the interest of Mme. de Pompadour lures Allègre as it lures Latude, and each sharper is taken in his own trap. Each blunders into prison as the merest fool of fate.

But of their getting out of prison not quite enough has been made by M. Funck-Brentano. By chimney and chamber, up to and down from the roof of Newgate, we have followed Jack Sheppard through such a night of autumn as is perhaps not elsewhere matched in history or report. In an afternoon and evening this flight was begun and ended; but Latude and Allègre were some eighteen months at their preparations, and yet their work was not done. An extended history of the flight would take note of much. What is the wardrobe-keeper of the Bastille doing that she forgets to number the napkins, sheets, and clothes that are sent into the chamber of Latude and Allègre—out of which, in the main, the great rope ladder, a work of amazing skill, is constructed? Who are the sentries on the terrace who allow the masons and gardeners to leave their tools lying about there of an evening? Among the moments of the escape itself two may be selected. The first, when one or other of the prisoners is swaying with a sense of sickness in a high wind on the rope ladder strung to the wall of the Bastille. The second, when both prisoners are to their arm-pits in the water of the moat, with the soldiers of the round some twelve feet above them, setting out on a nine hours' task to pick the stones from a wall four feet and a half in thickness. The scroll of years is rolled up, and we find Allègre a madman in Bicêtre, and Latude a plump and hale old gentleman of eighty taking the salutes of admirers on his

morning's outing in the sun. In the summer of 1804 he addressed to the sovereigns of Europe and the President of the United States a circular in which he requested benefits for a plan to revolutionise the army. He was always revolutionising something, and always requesting benefits: his projects would have founded a new Laputa. On January 1st, 1805, he died of pneumonia in Paris; the best schemer and the best and most plausible beggar of his generation: a man whose life seems to have been one of the longest of lies, and whose unveracious memory centres in a fine escape from the Bastille, wherein he bore but his part.

"The keys of all the doors," says Baron Trenck in the citadel of Magdeburg, "were kept by the governor; the inner door was not opened, but my bread and water were delivered through an aperture. The prison was opened only once a week, on a Wednesday, when the governor and town major paid their visit, after my den had been cleaned." On another occasion he remarks: "The window was never strictly examined." Yet again, "Had they altered the hour of their coming they must have found me at work; but this, during ten years, never happened, for the governor and town major were stupid creatures." Trenck, like Sheppard and Latude, found his profit in a system that ignored the systematic; but we may by no means under-rate his labours, his continuance in bearing and suffering, his philosophic heroism in defeat, his unflinching returns to the assault on his dungeon, and the courage that never ebbs. As revealed in his phantasmagoric "Memoirs," the young man is a character none too lovable, and we may fancy in

him more than a little of Munchausen ; but an "extensively fabulous blockhead," as Carlyle dubs him, he is not.

From Magdeburg, the place of his long captivity, he never succeeded in escaping ; but it is, none the less, at this citadel that he fascinates us ; and if the half of his toils is a true history, we have scarcely the fellow of it. From his first prison, Glatz, he vanished three times ; and the descent of ninety feet in one instance (with thongs sliced from a leather portmanteau, and added to the bed sheets), and the swimming of the Neiss in the second instance—a wounded companion clinging to his neck—are earliest among the feats that commend him to us. At Glatz he tries to bring about a rebellion in the prison itself (tries the same thing again at Magdeburg), an incident of which I recall but one modern parallel, a little-known episode of the Franco-German War.

The tale of Trenck in Magdeburg would pass belief, were we not assured on the one hand, by constant proof, of his extraordinary physical strength and quickness of recovery from fatigue ; and on the other hand of the comparative ease with which a prisoner supplied with money in such a garrison—full of disaffected officers and subordinates—could buy assistance in the matters of tools, letter-carrying, hoodwinking of governors, and so forth. But no aid that Trenck gets by bribery or cajolery spoils for a moment the reader's interest in his own extravagant pains ; fettered, padlocked, naked, bleeding, choking, and once for a space of hours buried alive under the stones of his own excavating. Six months at one time he is at it, eight months at another ; and this, if we may believe him, goes on for years. In

Magdeburg (after four battles for freedom at Glatz) there are seven separate plans of escape, and one of the least of them discloses the prisoner at work on the fourth of four wooden doors, which in succession he cuts through with a knife in four-and-twenty hours. We draw breath—and leave him at it. Is this whole history a fable? There is not the slightest reason for believing so. We have no other example of efforts renewed and sustained as Trenck's were, year after year, during ten years at least; but from first to last he had youth on his side, a constitution of the finest, and in all situations a swaggering resolve to get the better of his gaolers. Everything that Trenck did had been done before, but no one else was ever able to keep on doing it as long as he did. Readers of his "Memoirs" will scarcely cavil at the suggestion that, as the prisoner of Magdeburg, he conquers fate in being conquered by it.

#### VIII. THE FINEST NAPOLEON STORY IN THE WORLD

The return of Napoleon from Elba—for a triumphant return it was, much more than a flight—offers very little of romantic interest. The painting of the Emperor's brig, *L'Inconstant*, "like an English vessel," is almost the only thing that suggests escape. We have the little incident of Mariotti's spy, the oil-seller; but the oil-seller as a spy is a feeble and foolish character. We have the shrewd and persistent suspicions of Campbell<sup>1</sup>; but Campbell is too late at the fair.

The preparations of Napoleon are patent. They bear no resemblance to plot or conspiracy. Of plot

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Neil Campbell, English Commissioner at Elba.



or conspiracy, indeed, it may be definitely said that there was none. Napoleon, rightly gauging the situation in France, had chosen the apt moment for his descent.

The brig is docked, recoppered, careened, made fit for sea, and victualled for one hundred and twenty men. Vincent the groom dismounts and packs the two berlins brought from France. Cartridges and other munitions of war are placed on board. All this goes on in the third week of February, 1814.

On the 25th of the month Napoleon held a reception of the notables of the island, whom he informed that he was leaving them. Someone murmured a word about Italy. Napoleon broke in with “*France! France!*” and all doubts on the subject were quashed. On the evening of this day, Saturday, Madame Mère found her son pacing the garden with rapid strides in the moonlight. He told her of his project. At the Sunday morning’s audience he instructed everyone that he should leave Elba that night. At 8 p.m. he was on board *L’Inconstant*. This was the hour precisely at which Campbell and Captain Adye set foot on the British ship of war, *Partridge*, in Leghorn roads.

The rest of the story is familiar. Napoleon ought to have been caught, but was not. The light airs favoured him, and the *Inconstant* and flotilla of six smaller craft were wafted northwards. Two French frigates were easily eluded. One of them, the *Zephyr*, hailed the brig “and inquired how the great man was. ‘Marvellously well,’ came the reply, suggested by Napoleon himself.” Napoleon had the oars out, but Adye in the *Partridge* lay at anchor until four on Monday morning.

“If the wind had blown from the north or north-

east with some strength, as it often does at that time of the year, Napoleon would have been held fast at Portoferraio, or at least would have been unable to get out of the range of danger, while the *Partridge* would have reached Elban waters in a very short time. An encounter would have occurred, and the *Inconstant*, in her crowded condition and with her scratch crew, would have been no match for the British ship. Napoleon would have been killed or taken prisoner."

Campbell would certainly have been for no half-measures; and, had Adye shown some smartness with his ship, Waterloo had probably been postponed.

"Napoleon might, no doubt, have escaped in a balloon; he might have floated away in a barrel; and he might have contrived to be thrown into the sea in a sack, pretending that he was a corpse. The famous Monte-Cristo story should be taken as a Napoleonic allegory, evolved in the mind of Dumas by his visit to Elba, and his fervent admiration for the great Emperor. 'I am a dead man,' Napoleon kept saying until all believed it; and it was as a corpse thrown into the sea, and emerging alive, that he succeeded in reaching the land, to startle the world."<sup>1</sup>

There is little in this adventure to strike the beholder with wonder. It was skilfully conducted throughout, but what ought chiefly to impress us is, as Dr. Rose observes, "the imbecility of the old Governments and of their servants." A Napoleonic achievement more wonderful by far is the march from the coast to the capital; no battle fought, no

<sup>1</sup> De Coubertin, "France Since 1814"; Norwood Young, "Napoleon in Exile: Elba (1814-1815)"; J. Holland Rose, "Life of Napoleon I," vol. ii.; "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ix., "Napoleon."

drop of blood shed, not a musket snapped at the invader : " one of the miracles of history."

What if there be in the career of Napoleon a miracle surpassing this ? Suppose that he did not die at St. Helena. Suppose that he never went there ! Remote posterity will believe with difficulty many things recorded of him ; and perhaps in five hundred years or so the exquisite *jeu d'esprit* of Archbishop Whately, which proves to a nicety that Napoleon never existed,<sup>1</sup> may come to be regarded as something other than one of the best and gravest of literary jests. If posterity, or some part of posterity, be agreed that Napoleon I never lived, it will be comparatively easy for this part of posterity to believe that he was never banished to St. Helena.

It is, however, necessary for the purpose of the story to accept the premise of his existence. Posterity will have ample time to decide the point. The supreme crisis of his life being come, the fallen Emperor, taking counsel with the few faithful who remain to him, resolves that he will not go into banishment. Why should he ? The Rock in the Atlantic seems to offer little as a residence ; and there he will be, no longer sovereign of a Lilliputian Elba, but plain General Bonaparte, and a prisoner to boot. True, he was not yet assured of his fate ; but it must have been with some misgiving that he weighed the policy of Lord Liverpool's Cabinet ; and behind Lord Liverpool were Austria, Russia, and Prussia. It would be better not to walk into the parlour.

Now Napoleon had such a *sosie*, or " double," as never was before. This man, a simple soldier, was well known to the police of the Empire, and the

<sup>1</sup> " Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte."

Emperor had often made use of him. As is known, Napoleon, being allowed to take three officers with him, had chosen General Bertrand, General de Montholon, and General Gourgaud, while the State Councillor, Comte de Las Cases, was to go as Secretary. With a devotion touching the sublime these gentlemen lent themselves to the great deception; and on July 15th, 1815, meekly and respectfully followed the dummy Napoleon on board the *Bellerophon*. The incomparable double must have taken pains to grow fat with his master, for, if the outline sketch by Colonel Planat is correct, it is a very pursy ex-Emperor who makes himself agreeable to Captain Maitland on the quarter-deck, is next received by Admiral Sir George Cockburn on the *Northumberland*, sojourns a while at Jamestown, plays with little Betsy Balcombe, and finally settles at Longwood and enters on the immortal quarrel with Sir Hudson Lowe. All these people are completely taken in. No one unmasks or is even puzzled by the inscrutable double of Napoleon, the simple soldier of the second class: suspicion sleeps at wisdom's gate.

And Napoleon himself? What is Napoleon doing while the prince of doubles takes snuff with Captain Maitland and teases the fairy child of merchant Balcombe at the merchant's villa of the Briars?

Napoleon goes quietly to Florence. The greatest escape in history is executed with not a single hitch. Into the gates of the beautiful city where Dante was born "under the sign of the twins," the Man of Destiny enters with thanksgiving.

Alas! but he has his living to earn. To State and Empire indeed he is dead. He has almost in effect passed into that future life wherein the satirist

Rabelais gives to warriors and "those that had been great lords and ladies here" the rewards due to them. Alexander the Great is a darning of stockings. Hector has become a scullion. Xerxes sells mustard. Hannibal mends kettles. Cyrus has turned cowherd. Cleopatra hawks onions. Pope Julius cries puddings up and down the thoroughfares of Hades. Had Rabelais written in the twentieth century, what trade had he assigned to Napoleon in the Shades?

Napoleon in Florence buys the small business of an optician, and plants his expanding waistcoat behind the counter.

He gains the esteem of his neighbours, with whom he chats familiarly in his shop and on his doorstep, pinching the ear of a crony perhaps, as he would do at the Tuileries. So extraordinary is the likeness they remark in him to the hero whom the horrid English have carried to St. Helena, that they nickname the optician "Napoleon." Clap him in the grey coat, they say, give him the little three-cornered hat, mount him on the charger in whose saddle he bumped like a jack tar, and you would not know the plump diminutive shopman from the terrible Emperor with the graven features and the snowy hand.

One day he disappeared from Florence. In the keeping of an intimate friend he left a letter addressed to the King of France; and the representative of Louis XVIII distributed a sum of one hundred thousand francs to purchase the silence of persons who were, or were thought to be, in the secret of "Napoleone" the affable optician.

At or about the same moment of time, a certain man unknown, some fifty years of age, attempting to climb into the park of Schoenbrunn, the prison-

home of Napoleon's son and heir, was shot dead by a sentry.

And now we come to the kernel. The parish register (*les registres d'état civil*) of the village in Lorraine where the inimitable and incredible *soste* was born, gives his obituary in three words: "*Mort à Sainte-Hélène*"—"Died at St. Helena." The date is that of the death of Napoleon.<sup>1</sup>

■ What manner of joke, the reader asks, is this? It is, as I gather, the serious contribution to Napoleonic annals of a French pamphleteer of whose very name I am unaware. In the middle of an article in the Paris *Figaro* (Nov. 25th, 1912), discussing ■ crazy Belgian theory of Shakespeare, I came upon ■ reference to "une étude abondamment documentée, d'où il résultait que Napoleon I<sup>er</sup> n'était pas mort à Sainte-Hélène," etc.; and this, in a free rendering, I have a little expanded. The critic of *Figaro* does not name the pamphleteer nor give the title of his pamphlet. At the time I read it, the subject had no especial interest for me, and the War has dispersed my literary helpers in Paris. Neither the London Library nor the British Museum itself was able to put me on any trace of the optician of Florence who addressed to Louis XVIII what must have been the most surprising letter his corpulent Majesty ever received. I have therefore taken the liberty of presenting the story as I found it. It seemed a pity to leave in the pages of *Figaro* the escape of Napoleon from St. Helena. I wrote an anonymous note on it in ■ weekly paper. This excepted, the story is new in English.

Fabulous throughout, it is logical enough to confound ■ Paris *jugé d'instruction*, and if the documents are acceptable it must rank among the curiosities of coincidence. How, one wonders, does the author square his facts with those in which historians have acquiesced? The daily life of the exiles at Longwood is known to ■ in every detail. It was a life made wretched for everybody by the deliberate policy which was presently to take shape in the great Napoleonic Legend that ultimately conducts Napoleon III to the throne of Napoleon I. Is it a common soldier of the ex-Emperor's army who inspires and sustains this policy? The essential literature of the Rock is comprised in the "Memorials." Is it ■ man from the ranks who dictates the "Memorials"? Has Las Cases the patience to write for four or five years with his tongue perpetually in his cheek? The literature of Napoleon surpasses that of the Man in the Iron Mask (which runs to some thousands of volumes), and ■ ought at the very least to have twenty biographies of the sentry who shot him on the wall of Schoenbrunn.

## II

### FROM THE GRIP OF THE INQUISITION

#### IS CASANOVA'S ESCAPE FROM THE *PIOMBI* A TRUE HISTORY?

*"A Rake's Progress."*—HOGARTH.

*"The hand of the Holy Office was outstretched against all."*  
ENCYC. BRIT.

*"Plain language from truthful James."*—BRET HARTE.





## FROM THE GRIP OF THE INQUISITION

### I

FORTUNE, unforeseen and unanticipated, has shed a posthumous blessing on Giovanni Jacopo Casanova de Seingalt. Lucky James! No critic could pretend to take for granted a reader's knowledge of Casanova's "Memoirs" (the great bulk of which remains to this day in the French), but certain readers there must be, even in our own self-conscious era, who would confess to a superficial knowledge of those amazing five thousand pages. Dismissed during many years to the topmost shelf, as a work in which a great deal of the patently improper was mixed with a great deal of the probably mendacious, it awaited there the attentions of a prurient or indifferent curiosity.

Less on a sudden than by stages, a curiosity of another kind, a critical curiosity, began to be fastened on the "Memoirs," and on their brilliant, brazen and triumphant rogue of an author. Casanova's book might be sadly wicked as a whole; but he had painted in it a very lifelike picture of manners and customs and morals in the Europe of the eighteenth century. He pretended to have rubbed shoulders with kings and their mistresses, with princes and nobles, with Voltaire and other high literary gentlemen; and to have travelled (sometimes even with ambassadorial credentials) from one end of the Continent to the other. As to a cardinal

episode of the "Memoirs," there seemed to be very little question. Casanova had broken prison from the "Piombi," or "Leads," of Venice.

This adventure has been classed among the greatest and most romantic of its kind, and it started Casanova on his career through Europe as the man most *à la mode* of his day.

Suppose, then, that the "Memoirs" in the main could be proved worthy of credence? Suppose it could be demonstrated that Casanova had been received at this Court and the other, had penetrated into exclusive literary circles, had hobnobbed with and contradicted Voltaire, had really achieved celebrity in all those celebrated capitals? These various facts established, the lively and shameless "Memoirs" (for in modern literature there is no other work, professedly and seriously autobiographical, in which the author has more complacently written himself a blackguard) must at once be classed, from the historian's standpoint, among the vital and golden documents of their generation. In a word, these facts attested, the book so gratuitously and clamantly indecent, must begin to live again in what Coleridge calls the faith of reason.

It was to this end that scholars up and down Europe, in all the places where the splendid and soulless roué—with his volcanic passions and his stony heart—claims to have done his amorous prowlings and his casual businesses in literature and politics, set themselves at last upon his traces. The game proved worth the candle. During twenty years or more, substantial spoil in the form of proofs has been gathered in the chase. In respect of his most important claims on our belief

the credit of the great braggart has been restored to him. Through the variegated tissue of erotic intrigue and cosmopolitan adventure runs the clear thread of an actual and demonstrable destiny. Three countries have specially distinguished themselves by their emulation in research: Italy, for Casanova is Venetian; Germany, for on German soil it was that he left his MSS.; and France, for it was in French that the "Memoirs" were composed. But Casanovists have been delving also in the archives of Copenhagen, Madrid, Prague, and Constantinople. Whithersoever he said that he had wandered the snare has been set for him, and to the gain of his own recital he has usually been taken in it.

The large results of many separate and independent perquisitions are dealt with by M. Edouard Maynial in a critical volume of the liveliest charm and interest.<sup>1</sup> He has made his own investigations too, and is no way dependent on the acquisitions of other and friendly rivals in the field. Within the compass of one small treatise M. Maynial has, of course, attempted no reconstruction of that prodigious life of the senses in which Casanova seems to incarnate the pagan and sensual elements of the entire eighteenth century. But, having shown the documentary worth of the "Memoirs," he proceeds to exhibit Casanova in his manifold relations with his age; and we have vivid glimpses of the strange and inexhaustible creature as diplomatist, man of letters, sorcerer, thief, rip, gambler, and universal charmer. It is an intensely live sketch of a type of fortune-seeker, not less destructive than seductive, for which the eighteenth century was peculiarly

<sup>1</sup> "Casanova et son Temps," par Edouard Maynial.

responsible, if indeed it did not in a manner create that type.

It is for me here to ask, in my readers' interest, what credit shall be given to Casanova's history of his escape from the prison of the Inquisition. Is it, in the main, fact or "*féerie*"? It has generally been received as a classic of its kind. Is this its proper station?

## II

Casanova tells us that in July, 1755, the Tribunal of the Inquisition at Venice issued orders to "Messer Grande" (the title borne by the Chief Archer of the Republic) to capture him alive or dead. The elderly patrician Bragadino, *Senator amplissime*, by whom he was treated as a son, counselled him to fly. Casanova made light of the matter.

On the 26th of the month the "terrible Messer Grande" seized him in his room. As to the cause of the arrest Casanova is not too precise. He leads us to suppose that a spy of the Inquisition had denounced him for sorcery. He ridicules the charge, but his apartment was full of treatises of magic, and in this art he was all his life a dabbler.

Messer Grande carried him by gondola to the prison of the Piombi (the Leads: the roof of the building was mainly of lead), near the Bridge of Sighs. He was placed first in a small, half-dark cell, five feet and a half high, forming three-quarters of a square, some two fathoms each way. Corresponding to the missing quarter was a recess or alcove, which would have held a bed; "but bed there was none, nor seat, nor table, nor furniture of any kind save a pail, and a shelf a foot wide." There he flung

the fine silk cloak and coat he had donned for the journey, and placing his elbows on the grating of the cell, saw the light falling into an attic next door, where huge rats were playing.

Prison was an ugly remove for Casanova. He was thirty years of age, an athletic and vigorous young man, who had tasted life at many sources. He had been priest, soldier, lawyer. He had travelled through Italy, Græcia Magna and Minor, Asia Minor, Constantinople, "and the finest cities of France and Germany." He had played high, turned night into day, steeped himself in amorous adventure, and was ready, he says, "to violate every law which might baulk me of satisfaction, compensation, or revenge for everything which I could interpret as an insult or an injury." And here he sits in the prison of the Inquisition.

Coming out of the frenzy which takes hold on so many prisoners in the first hours of confinement, he flung himself upon the bare boards and fell asleep.

Furniture was brought to him the next morning, and he learned that his gaoler, one Laurent or Lorenzo, would visit him only once a day, at sunrise.

It is pretty clear that Casanova's offence, if he had committed any, was scarcely of a grievous kind; and though he had not been informed of the probable duration of his imprisonment, he had made up his mind that it would end with the term of office of the Inquisitors, on the last day of September. But September passed, and October; and he was neither brought to trial nor released. The colossus of the Inquisition had set its foot upon him, and he resolved to get from under it and liberate himself by force.

"To enable the reader," he says, "to understand

my flight from such a place as these Piombi, I must make him acquainted with the locality. These attics under the leads, in which State prisoners are incarcerated, are nothing else than the lofts at the top of the Ducal Palace, and derive their name from the sheets of lead which form the roof. The only entrance is either through the Palace doors, or through the State prisons, or again by the Bridge of Sighs already mentioned. The way up leads through the room where the Inquisitors of State sit, and the Secretary alone keeps the key, which he hands over to the gaoler only for the short time—very early in the morning—during which he waits on the prisoners. This duty is performed at daybreak, because the archers coming and going later in the day would be seen by the persons who should happen to have business with the Council of Ten; since this assembly meets daily in an adjoining room called La Bussola, and the archers necessarily pass through it every time they have been up to the attics.

“ These prisons are divided on the opposite sides of the Palace, three to the west—mine was one of these—and three to the east. The gutter of the roof on the western side runs down into the courtyard; the other is exactly over the canal called Rio di Palazzo. On that side the dungeons are very light, and high enough to stand upright in, which is not the case in the prison where I was confined, known as the Trave, from the huge beam which cut off my light. The floor of my cell was exactly above the ceiling of the Inquisitors’ room, where they commonly met only at night after the daily sitting of the Council of Ten, of which all three are also members.

“ Knowing the locality as well as I did, and the

regular habits of the Inquisitors, the only means of escape, or at any rate the only means I thought likely to succeed, was to pierce through the floor of my room ; but I could not do this without tools, and that was a difficulty in a place where all communication with the outer world was forbidden, and where no visits or letter-writing were allowed. To bribe an archer would have needed a large sum, and I had no money. Supposing even that the gaoler and his two men would have allowed me to throttle them—for I had no weapon but my hands—there was always a third man-at-arms on guard at the door of the corridor, which he kept locked, and only opened when a comrade wishing to leave gave him the password. In spite of all these obstacles the only thing I thought of was how to escape.”

While he was considering the means a new prisoner was brought to share his cell. At the end of a month this man was transferred to another chamber, and Casanova then began to get seriously to work. He had a half-hour's walk every morning in the attic, and here he lighted on a Crusoe's treasure. Like the attic of Buquoit's first prison, this was a kind of lumber-room ; and Casanova found pieces of old furniture, boxes of papers, heaps of uncut pens, balls of string, and other things delightful to a man who lives in a cell and is seeking how to escape from it. There were two great prizes, and he picked up the first on one outing and the second on another. The first was a little slab of polished black marble. In his recent life in the streets and brothels and gambling-houses of Venice this would have been about as useful to him as the Rosetta Stone or a tablet of Moses. He promptly

put it in his pocket. The second prize was a round bolt of iron, and any prisoner is in luck who has an iron to sharpen.

With his bit of marble for a hone he gave a point to the bolt, and was then in possession of a practical "jemmy," or crowbar. He decided that his easiest scheme was to dig a hole through the floor under his bed.

"I knew that the room to which this would conduct me was the one in which I had been received on my arrival by the Secretary of the Inquisitors; and I fancied that, could I but hide under the council table during the night, I might make a dash for it when the door was opened in the morning. . . . But it might take me two months to cut my way through, and how meanwhile could I avoid discovery when the guards came to sweep out my cell? . . . I began by telling them not to trouble themselves to do so, but Lorenzo was inquisitive respecting this unusual request. I told him that the dust raised by the sweeping was peculiarly offensive to me. For a while he seemed satisfied; then he grew suspicious again, and not only ordered the cell to be swept, but examined it himself with a lighted candle every morning."

Casanova then pricked his finger, smeared his handkerchief with the blood, and lay in bed to await the coming of Lorenzo. The sweeping, he said, had brought on so violent a fit of coughing that he must have broken a blood-vessel. The doctor was sent for, and this gentleman plays up to the prisoner in a highly amusing manner. He must have seen at once that no blood-vessel had been broken, but he proceeded to bleed Casanova, and assured Lorenzo that the inhaling of dust was a very dangerous



matter. Why, he knew of a young man who had recently died from the same cause! Poor Lorenzo apologised profusely. It was a thing to be remembered, he said; though he could declare that all the other distinguished gentlemen in his care enjoyed the best of health—and their rooms had been swept with tolerable regularity.

The days of winter in the dark upper chamber were a torment. If he could but procure even a miserable kitchen lamp! A cup, a wick, oil, flint and steel, tinder and matches: all these things were needful. All of them, under one pretext and another, were procured; and again he was about to resume his operations on the floor. Again he suffered interruption. A Jew was sent to bear him company, and this unwelcome guest he had for two months. Everyone, by the way, whom he brings upon the scene Casanova sketches to the life, with a verve and humour that keep his reader perpetually entertained. The whole "Mémoires" are a continuous stirring and glittering masque and revel, a Fair of all the Vanities.

On the departure of the Hebrew money-lender, "a hare-brained creature, a huge gossip, ignorant of everything but his trade," Casanova set to work with redoubled energy. He had already cut into the planks, and delay was full of risk. Pushing the bed aside, he set the lamp on the floor, squatted down, and began to hack at, or rather to chip away, a wide plank of larch. After six hours of this "fatigue drill" he gathered up the débris in a towel or napkin, to be emptied on the morrow behind the heap of papers in the outer room. On the first day he got through a plank two inches thick, but it took him three weeks to reduce the

three thicknesses of planks of which the floor was composed. Then, to his horror, he came upon a stratum of tessellated marble pavement. This seemed a clencher; but no: he recalled a story of Hannibal's opening a passage through the Alps "by breaking down the rocks with axes and other implements softened in vinegar." He doubted, but "proceeded to pour a bottle of strong vinegar, which I had by me, into the hole; and next day, whether it was the result of the vinegar, or whether, rested by the delay, I worked with greater energy and patience, I found I should ultimately triumph over this new difficulty, for there was no need to break the stones, only to pulverize the cement in which they were set with the point of my tool. And I soon perceived with great delight that the surface of it presented the only difficulty. In four days the mosaic floor was destroyed without the slightest injury to the point of my crowbar."

Beneath the marble pavement he encountered another plank, but for this he was prepared. "I had great difficulty, however, in cutting through it, for as the hole in the planking was over ten inches in depth, it was well-nigh impossible to use the crowbar at the bottom of it, and I handled it awkwardly enough."

These efforts carried him to midsummer. On the afternoon of the 25th of June he was working in the hole, naked and bathed in sweat, when

"I heard—in such a passion of agony as can scarcely be described—the grinding of bolts in the corridor leading to my cell. What a moment! Blowing out the lamp, leaving the crowbar in the hole, pitching in after it the napkin filled with chips, I dragged the bed into its place, and flung myself

upon it as though dead, at the very instant the door flew open. Two seconds earlier and Lorenzo would have surprised me in the act."

Lorenzo brought with him yet another companion, the Abbé Count Fenarolo, a friend of Casanova's, who was liberated at the end of a week. The dark Triumvirate of the Inquisition cast a pretty wide net. There was a constant coming and going of prisoners of all degrees. Some of these were manifestly in no very grievous case; but in the hands of the Three, who might predict his fate? Casanova at this date may or may not have had reason for thinking that his imprisonment would be long: it is clear that he was prepared to go far in the hope of shortening it.

Commencing afresh, and steadily pursuing his task, on the 23rd of August he beheld it finished. He fixed on the 27th, St. Augustine's Eve, as the day of his escape, because, as he says, on this day there was to be a meeting of the Grand Council, "and consequently there would be no one in the Bussola adjoining the apartment through which I must take my way out." On the 25th the scheme was shattered.

At noon Casanova heard the noise of bolts. He had a presentiment that a stroke was about to fall, and sank with beating heart into his chair. Enter Lorenzo, smiling. "I congratulate you, sir! I bring good news." Was Casanova, then, to be enlarged? But this, in the circumstances, would be rather dreadful tidings; for his excavation would be laid bare—and the Three would revoke their pardon.

No; it was something very different.

"I am going to conduct you, sir," said the gaoler,

“ from this wretched hole to a fine, light, lofty room from which you will be able to see half Venice.”

Almost fainting with apprehension, Casanova implored Lorenzo to leave him where he was. “ You positively make me laugh, sir ! ” returned the gaoler. “ Have you suddenly lost your wits ? You are to be raised from hell into heaven, and you refuse ! Come, sir, you must obey ; you *know* you must. Rise, rise. I’ll give you an arm ; your clothes and books shall follow you.”

To “ heaven,” of course, he was forthwith translated ; and while Lorenzo returned to “ hell ” for the prisoner’s effects, the prisoner himself sat down stoically enough in attendance on the next move in the game.

“ Motionless as a graven image I sat there. The storm would burst upon my head, but I was indifferent ; despair was too deep in me. Two hours I sat there, seeing no one ; the door all this while open. Then there were footsteps in a fury of haste, and in broke Lorenzo, raging, blaspheming, foaming at the lips.

“ He began by ordering me to deliver up to him the axe and all the tools I had used for working through the floor, and to tell him the name of the man who had furnished me with them. I replied, without stirring and with perfect coolness, that I did not know what he was talking about. At this he commanded that I should be searched ; but rising with a bold face I defied these scoundrels, and taking off all my clothes : ‘ Do your duty,’ said I ; ‘ but do not lay a finger on me.’

“ They examined my mattresses, emptied out the straw mattress, and shook the cushions of my arm-chair ; nothing was to be found.

“ ‘ You do not choose to tell me where the instruments are with which you made the hole? Well, means can be found to make you speak.’

“ ‘ If indeed I have made a hole anywhere, I shall say that it was you who supplied me with the means of doing so, and that I have returned everything to you.’

“ At this threat, which made his followers grin with satisfaction—he had probably annoyed them by some insult—he stamped his feet, tore his hair, and rushed out like a madman. His people came back bringing me all my property, excepting my piece of marble and my lamp. Before leaving the corridor, and after locking my cell, he closed the two windows by which some fresh air came in. I thus found myself confined in a narrow space without a breath of air from anywhere. However, my situation did not trouble me particularly, for I confess on the whole I thought I had got off cheaply. In spite of his knowledge of his business, it had happily not occurred to him to turn my arm-chairs bottom upwards, and so being still possessed of my bolt, I returned thanks to Providence, and believed I might even now be allowed to regard it as the blessed instrument which, sooner or later, might procure me my deliverance.”

Hard on this we have a very curious interlude, the significance of which (though Casanova's pen is diplomatically silent on it) the sequel may perhaps reveal to us. Lorenzo for a brief spell was spiteful and suspicious. His spitefulness was expressed in the day's rations, which were scarcely eatable. His suspicions he conveyed to Casanova through the archer of the guard who was summoned to examine and sound the room. Casanova, following with his

eyes the archer and his sounding-rod, noticed that the ceiling was left untouched. The new and clean ceiling was something that he at once began to think about.

Little by little the moroseness of Lorenzo melted into an awkward kindness, and from this point there is a notable change in the situation. Casanova wanted, or pretended to want, certain books, and was for commissioning Lorenzo to buy them. Lorenzo said he could borrow them from another prisoner ; and here the drama of the escape (together with every question of the truth of it that awaits analysis) in reality begins.

In a very short time Casanova received by the hands of Lorenzo a volume from some prisoner unknown. Here, thought he, was a chance "of opening communications with someone who might join me in a plan of escape—a plan of which the outline was already in my mind." Opening the book the instant he was alone, he found in a paraphrase of Seneca's line : "*Calamitosus est, animus futuri anxius*" ("Unhappy that man who broods on misfortunes to come"). Casanova composed some lines in response, wrote out a list of the books in his possession, and slid them down the back of the borrowed work. This he handed next morning to Lorenzo, saying he had read it through, and would be glad of another. On the title page of the one he was returning he had inscribed the word "*Latet*" ("hidden"). In a few moments Lorenzo brought a second volume.

"No sooner was I alone," says Casanova, "than I opened the book and found a loose leaf, with words to this effect written on it in Latin : 'We are two in this prison, and we are delighted to find that the

ignorance of our avaricious gaoler procures us a privilege which is unexampled in this place. I who write am Marino Balbi, a noble Venetian and a friar of Somasco, and my companion is Count Andrea Asquino, of Udine, the chief town of Friuli. He bids me tell you that all the books he has, of which you find the list in the back of this volume, are at your service ; but I must warn you, Signore, that we must take the greatest precautions to conceal our communications from Lorenzo.'

" In the position in which we found ourselves, it was not strange that we should both have had the same idea—that of sending the list of our scanty library, and of slipping it into the back of a book ; this was an act of simple good sense ; but I thought it strange that the counsel of caution should be written on a loose leaf. It seemed unlikely that Lorenzo should not open the book, and, as he could not read, he would have put it in his pocket to get someone to tell him the contents ; everything would be discovered at the very beginning. This led me to conclude that my correspondent was somewhat heedless.

" After reading the list of books, I wrote down who I was, how I had been arrested, my ignorance of the crime for which I was imprisoned, and the hopes I had of finding my way out. Balbi responded in a letter of sixteen pages. Count Asquino did not write; the monk gave me the history of all his own misfortunes. He had been a prisoner four years for having broken his vows ; the first time he had been admonished, the second time he had been threatened, the third time he had been put in prison. The Superior of his convent, however, sent him his dinner every day. This letter in all its details

betrayed the writer ; I knew the man. He was eccentric, illogical, spiteful, silly and ungrateful ; I could detect all this in his letter ; for, after saying how wretched he should be but for the society of Count Asquino, who was seventy years of age, he filled two pages with abuse of him, describing his faults and absurdities. In the world I should have taken no notice of such a man ; but under the leads I was forced to make the most of every chance. I found a pencil, pen, and some paper slipped into the back of the binding, and this enabled me to write at my ease.

“ Balbi also sent me a history of all the prisoners who were at present in these cells, and who had come and gone during the four years he had spent there. He told me that the archer who secretly brought him whatever he asked for was named Niccolò ; he had told him the names of the prisoners and all he knew about them, and to prove the truth of this he repeated all he had heard about the hole in my room. He told me that I had been removed from my old cell to make room for a patrician named Priuli, and that it had cost Lorenzo two hours' work to repair the mischief I had done ; that he had communicated the secret to the carpenter, the locksmith, and the archers on pain of death. One day more, the archer had added, and Casanova would have escaped in so ingenious a way that Lorenzo would have hung for it ; for, though the gaoler had expressed great surprise at the sight of the hole, there could be no doubt that it was he who had supplied the necessary tools for such a difficult piece of work.

“ ‘ Niccolò told me,’ my correspondent added, ‘ that Signor Bragadino promised him a thousand sequins if he could help you to make your escape ;



but that Lorenzo, having heard this, flatters himself that he can gain the reward without any risk by making his wife obtain your release from Signor Diedo. Not one of the archers dares speak of what has happened for fear that Lorenzo, if he should succeed, should get him dismissed out of revenge. He implored me to tell him all about it, and how I had procured the tools, and to trust implicitly to his discretion."

Monk Balbi, if all this is true, was plainly not the discreetest of men. Casanova was none the less inclined to humour him, for the fellow-captive might be moulded to his purposes. He held counsel with himself as follows :

"I must be free at whatever cost. The tool I have is capital, but I cannot possibly make any use of it, for my room is sounded all over every morning by tapping with an iron bar, excepting on the ceiling. Hence, if I am to hope to get out, it must be through the ceiling, but to achieve this I must make a hole, and I cannot do that from below, for it is not a matter of a day's work. I must have an accomplice, and he may escape with me. I had no choice, so I could not employ anyone but the friar. He was eight-and-thirty, and though not overburdened with good sense, I fancied that the love of liberty, man's first instinct, would give him enough determination to enable him to carry out my instructions. To begin with, I must make up my mind to tell him everything, and then devise some means of sending him my tool. These were two difficult matters.

"I began by asking him whether he pined for liberty, and if he were prepared to run all risks to secure it with me. He replied that there was nothing which he and his comrade would not do to be quit

of their bonds ; but, he added, it was useless to rack our brains over schemes which could not be carried into execution. He filled four long pages with the impossibilities which presented themselves to his foolish mind, for the poor wretch saw no plan of any kind which offered the remotest hope of success. I answered that general difficulties did not daunt me ; that, in making my plans, only difficulties of detail had engaged my attention, that these could certainly be conquered ; and I ended by giving him my word of honour that he should be free if he would pledge himself to follow my instructions to the letter."

The promise being given, Casanova let the monk into the secret of the " little crowbar, twenty inches long." With this Balbi " was to break through the ceiling of his room, and then to pierce a hole in the wall that separated us." Having joined Casanova, it would next be the monk's business to drive a hole through Casanova's ceiling, and help him out thereby. For all that was thereafter to be done Casanova would make himself responsible. These details are not as clear as they might be, but I am closely following Casanova's own narrative. He addresses himself again to Balbi :

" All you have to think of is how I may best transmit to you the instrument of our safety, without giving the bearer of it the faintest suspicion. Meanwhile get your gaoler to bring you a couple of score of pictures of the saints, large enough to cover the walls and ceiling of your room. These pious images will rouse no suspicions in Lorenzo, and will avail to hide the gap you must make in the ceiling. It will take you some days to work the opening, and Lorenzo will not see what you have done each

morning if you cover it up with a picture. If you ask me why I do not do this myself, I reply that I cannot, because I am an object of suspicion to our warder, and you will no doubt think this a valid objection."

The conveyance of the crowbar to Balbi brings us to the celebrated comedy of the macaroni pie. Casanova had desired Lorenzo to buy him a new folio edition of the Bible ; less for his devotions than as a vehicle for the transport of the " instrument of safety." But the bolt was two inches longer than the book. It was then that he had the inspiration of the dish of macaroni.

" I told Lorenzo that I meant to keep Saint Michael's day by having a dish of macaroni with cheese, and that as I wished to do a little civility to the gentleman who had been so kind as to lend me the books, I wanted to send him a large dish of it, and to prepare it with my own hands. Lorenzo told me that the said gentleman was very curious to see the big book which had cost three sequins. This made matters easy. ' Very good,' said I, ' I will send it him with the macaroni, only, bring me the largest dish you have in the place, for I want to do things on a grand scale.'

" He promised to satisfy me. I wrapped my crowbar in paper and slipped it into the back of the Bible, taking note that it stuck out no more at one end than at the other. By placing a large dish of macaroni very full of melted butter on the book, I was sure that his eyes must be fixed on the rim of the dish to avoid spilling the grease on the book. I warned Father Balbi of all this, bidding him be careful how he took the dish, and above all to take both book and dish together, and not one before the other.

“ On the day appointed Lorenzo came earlier than usual, with a saucepan full of boiling macaroni, and all the necessary ingredients for seasoning it. I melted a quantity of butter, and after putting the macaroni into the dish I poured butter on it till it reached the very edge. The dish was a huge one, much larger than the book on which I had placed it. All this I did at the door of my cell, Lorenzo standing outside.

“ When everything was ready I carefully lifted the Bible with the dish, taking care to turn the back of the volume to the bearer ; and I bid Lorenzo hold his arms well apart and spread his hands, to take great care not to spill the grease on the book, and to carry it straight to its destination. As I gave him the precious burthen I looked him in the face, and was delighted to see that he never took his eyes off the butter for fear of spilling it. He said he had better take the dish first and come back for the book ; but I said it would spoil all the value of the gift, and that it must all go together. Then he complained that I had put too much butter, and said with a laugh that if he spoilt it he would not be responsible for the damage.

“ As soon as I saw the Bible safe in the clown’s hands I felt certain of success, for he could not see the ends of the bolt without lurching very much to one side, and I saw nothing to induce him to take his eyes off the dish which he had to keep level. I watched him till he went into the outer cell, leading to the monk’s, and I heard Balbi blow his nose three times, the signal we had agreed on to show that everything had arrived safely. And in a minute Lorenzo returned to tell me so.”

Balbi began forthwith to ply the crowbar. Having

delved his way through the ceiling he covered the opening with a pious print stuck on by means of bread-crumbs. Towards the middle of October he had dislodged thirty-six bricks from the wall. On the morning of the 16th Casanova heard a stamping of feet overhead, followed by three light taps—the signal that all was going well. The next day Balbi wrote that the completion of his task was now but a question of hours. Casanova determined to escape on the next day but one.

“On this very day—it was Monday—while Balbi was striking his last blows—I heard the opening of a door close to my cell. The blood congealed in my veins, but I had the presence of mind to give the two raps that warned Balbi to retreat to his cell and put everything in order. In a moment Lorenzo entered, and asked pardon for thrusting on me a very undesirable companion. This was a little lean ugly chap of fifty or so, very indifferently attired, with a black crop wig awry on his head. He looked the villain from crown to heel, and when Lorenzo assured him that he *was* one he didn't turn a hair.”

Again and again was this venture smitten at the core; but since the Tribunal was master in its own prison Casanova resigned himself to the fatality that seemed to steer him. Having proved in his adroit and quiet way (he has told us how he had tried his hand at lawyering) the feelings of the man in the black crop wig, he proceeded to play upon them. The black crop was as hungry as a rat, as thirsty as Egypt, and as superstitious as a fakir. Casanova gorged him with food, made him drunk, and then tackled and tickled his superstitions. The man, Soradaci by name, calling himself a barber, was a

spy in the pay of the Republic. He had foolishly and clumsily played false with his employers. Messer Grande thereupon had clapped Messer Soradaci into prison. He was for God and the Republic, a bottle of wine and a crucifix. He talked of his father, a warder of galley-slaves ; of his wife, " a Legrenzi, the daughter of a clerk to the Council of Ten," who would be in despair at not knowing what had become of him. He cried for holy water and a print of the Virgin ; for wine and garlic. Grovelling at Casanova's feet, he kissed his hand. He was a very good spy, he said, and a scourge of criminals ; he was a good barber, too ; and, taking one thing with another, he did not quite know why he was in prison, and hoped he would soon be out. By wile on wile Casanova reduces and subdues this devotee of the bottle, the Republic, and the Virgin ; and the drama advances.

Soradaci was taken out, examined, and brought back ; and Casanova conjectured that the barber-spy would share his lodging for some time to come.

It was the last week of October, and in the first week of November the Inquisitors and the Secretary were in the habit of taking a three days' trip into the country. On the nights of their absence Lorenzo was religiously and ecstatically drunk, and not too punctual thereby on his morning rounds. Herein salvation might lie for Casanova and the monk. He tells us farther that, having consulted a page of Ariosto, under guidance of certain cabalistic formulæ, he had lighted on the verse : "*Fra il fin d'ottobre e il capo di novembre*" (" Betwixt the end of October and the beginning of November ").

And now the best means of bamboozling Soradaci ?

The spy had already done a traitorous turn to Casanova, handing over to the Secretary a letter confided to him by his fellow-prisoner. This missive was of no significance whatever; Casanova had composed it as a test of Soradaci's probity. On its betrayal, however, he had affected to hold the spy in horror; and in particular had invoked on him the direst vengeance of his friend the Virgin. In the hour of these imprecations Soradaci had fled to his mattress; frightened, like Sancho, out of his seven senses, and prepared to take his corporal oath that the days of his years were numbered. This was the season to take him in hand again, and Casanova resumed his parable in these terms:

“Your frightful treachery has cost me a sleepless night, for the letter I gave you might well ensure my condemnation to perpetual imprisonment. My sole consolation, I confess, was the certainty that in less than three days you would perish in torments under my gaze. With my heart full of this wicked thought—unworthy of a Christian—weariness at last brought sleep to me; and as I slept I had a vision of the Blessed Virgin, whose image you there behold. She said to me: “Soradaci is a devotee of my Sacred Rosary and under my protection. I desire you will forgive him; then the curse now laid on him will cease to act. As the reward of your generosity, I will send one of my angels in human form to descend from heaven and open the roof of your prison and take you out in five or six days. The angel will begin his labours to-day exactly at noon, and cease at half an hour before sunset, for he must return to heaven by daylight. When you go, following the angel, take Soradaci with you, and provide for him, on condition of his giving up the

business of a spy. Tell him all this." With these words she vanished and I awoke.'

"Preserving perfect gravity and my prophetic tone, I kept an eye on the traitor's face; he seemed quite petrified. I then took my Book of Hours, I sprinkled the cell with holy water, and began to pretend to be praying, kissing the image of the Virgin from time to time. An hour later this creature, who till now had not opened his lips, asked me point-blank at what hour the angel would come down from heaven, and whether we should hear the noise he must make to open the cell. I replied that I was certain that he would come at noon precisely, and that we should hear him at work, and that he would stop at the hour specified by the Virgin.

" 'You may have been dreaming,' said he.

" 'I am sure I was not. Do you feel capable of vowing to renounce the business of a spy?'

"But instead of answering me he fell asleep, and only awoke two hours later to ask whether he might put off taking the pledge I required of him.

" 'You may put it off,' said I, 'until the angel comes in to release me; but if you then do not swear to renounce the atrocious trade which has brought you to this pass, and which will certainly bring you to the gallows, I shall leave you here; for so the Virgin has commanded, and she will deprive you of her protection.'

As I watched him, I read on his ugly face the satisfaction he felt, for he firmly believed that the angel would never come. He looked as though he pitied me. I only longed for the clock to strike; the whole farce amused me hugely, for I was sure that the arrival of the angel would utterly bewilder his miser-



able intellect. I knew that there could be no failure unless Lorenzo had forgotten to deliver the book, which was hardly possible.

“An hour before noon I insisted on dining; I drank nothing but water, and Soradaci drank all the wine, and he afterwards ate all the garlic I had, which added to his excitability. The instant I heard the first stroke of nineteen, I fell on my knees, desiring him, in a voice of thunder, to do the same. He obeyed, looking at me wildly. When I heard the noise of the priest behind the wall, ‘The angel is there!’ cried I, lying down flat on my face, and giving him a vigorous punch to make him take the same attitude. The noise of scraping was loud, and for a quarter of an hour I had the patience to remain in my uncomfortable position. Under any other circumstances I should have laughed to see the creature lie like a log; but I did not laugh, for I did not forget my laudable purpose of driving the animal mad, or at least reducing him to helplessness. His perverted soul could only be recalled to decent humanity by abject terror. As soon as I rose I knelt down, allowing him to do the same, and for three hours and a half I kept him at his beads. He fell asleep now and then, fatigued by his position rather than by the monotony of his occupation; but he never once interrupted me. Now and then he raised a furtive eye to the ceiling, and with stupidity stamped on every feature he bowed and nodded to the image of the Virgin, and all in a way too comical for words. When the clock struck half-past twenty-three, ‘Fall on your face,’ said I, in a tone of solemn devotion; ‘the angel is departing.’

“Balbi went down into his cell again, and we heard no more.”

With complete satisfaction Casanova saw that bewilderment and terror mingled in the foolish face of Soradaci. Then he fell a-wondering to which of his virtues could be ascribed the tender zeal of the Virgin in his behalf. "And you, sir," he continued; "what use could you make of a clown like me? and where should we live, for we could not stay in Venice?" "I'll take you for my servant," Casanova replied; "and the angel will lead us to some place that does not belong to St. Mark." He went on:

"To-morrow, when Lorenzo comes, you must lie still on your mattress with your face to the wall without stirring, without even looking at him. If he speaks to you you must tell him, without looking at him, that you have been unable to sleep, and that you want rest. Will you promise me this?"

"I promise to do exactly as you bid me."

"Swear it before this holy image at once."

"I swear, Blessed Mother of God, that when Lorenzo comes in I will not look at him, nor stir on my mattress."

"And I, Most Holy Mother, swear by your Sacred Son that if I see Soradaci make the smallest movement, or look at Lorenzo, I will rush on him and strangle him without mercy, to your honour and glory."

With this for encouragement, Casanova gave the man his supper, and then bade him go back to bed.

"As soon as he was asleep I wrote for two hours. I told Balbi the whole story, saying that if his work was far enough advanced he need only come to the ceiling of my cell, to break through the last boards, and come in. I notified to him that we were to escape on the night of the 31st of October, and that

we should be four, including his messmate and mine. It was now the 28th."

On the following morning Balbi wrote to say that the passage between the two cells was ready, and that the forcing of the last plank would be the affair of but four or five minutes.

When Lorenzo came in he did not so much as glance at the spy—fast in his beauty sleep. During this day, however, the poor dolt had one instant's glimmer of sense. Did not his patron think it rather strange that an angel should need such "everlasting of time" to get into a cell of the Piombi? "The ways of heaven," Casanova solemnly replied, "are inscrutable to mortals. It is clear that this thrice-blessed messenger, who could open the ceiling with a single breath, is working not in celestial but in human guise. Doubtless he takes the form of a man out of pity for us, who could not endure to look upon his true glory."

On the 31st they had their last interview with Lorenzo. As usual, Casanova handed him the book, which contained a final message for Balbi. The monk was to break through the ceiling towards midday. At that hour the plot should march unhindered, for Lorenzo would be off the scene, and the Inquisitors and Secretary were off to the country.

"I must tell you," said Casanova to Soradaci, when the gaoler had left them, "that we may now in a very short time expect the angel. He will bring with him, by the way, a pair of scissors, and it will be your ineffable privilege (think how you are blest in being a barber!) to clip his beard. You will afterwards clip mine."

"What! The angel wears a beard?"

"I really believe he does. When you have per-

formed your office we shall all ascend together. We shall vanish through the topmost roof, drop divinely into the Piazza of St. Mark, and proceed on our way to Germany."

As the hour struck, the angel could be heard spreading his wings overhead. Soradaci was about to prostrate himself. "It was no longer necessary," said Casanova; and Soradaci thereupon returned to his breakfast. In three minutes or so Balbi flopped through the ceiling, and into the arms of Casanova. "Your work is done," was Casanova's greeting of him; "and mine now begins." Soradaci dropped his dish, not knowing if he were gazing on angel, man, or demon. His senses rapt, he took the scissors from Balbi, and cut the beards of both conspirators.

Eager to reconnoitre the position, Casanova gave the spy into Balbi's hands, and mounted at once into the cell above, where he found the Count, an elderly and amiable gentleman, so cumbered with flesh that he could have escaped from the Piombi only on the pinions of Soradaci's angel. The Count began timorously to argue with Casanova on the recklessness of his plan. Yes; it was reckless enough, said Casanova; but to plan or death he was now committed, and to the plan he would stick.

He left the Count, and climbed as near as he could to the top of the prison. Arrived at a loft, he found that the rotten rafters yielded almost at a touch to his crowbar. In less than an hour he could make an opening through them. Returning to his cell, he sliced up his bedclothes and every other scrap of drapery he could find, and out of this material twisted the kind of practical rope of which in these pages we have so many fortifying glimpses.



. . . . Balbi flopped through the ceiling into the arms of Casanova.



The rope finished, Casanova made a bundle of his clothes ; and then, with Balbi and Soradaci, mounted again into the Count's chamber. Soradaci could be hoaxed to no farther purpose, and Casanova had thrown off the mask of the visionary. "Get your bundle ready," he said to Balbi, and went up to finish the hole in the roof.

"At two hours after sunset the hole was finished ; I had worked the rafters to powder, and the opening was twice as large as was needful. I could touch the sheet of lead outside. I could not raise it single-handed because it was riveted ; the friar helped me, and by pushing the crowbar between the gutter and the sheet of lead I detached it, then, raising it on our shoulders, we bent it up high enough to allow of our squeezing through the opening. Putting my head out to reconnoitre, I saw with dismay how bright the moon was, now in the first quarter. It was a check which we must endure with patience, and wait till midnight to escape, when the moon would have gone to light up the Antipodes. On such a glorious night all Venice would be out on the Piazza below, and we dared not venture out on the roof ; our shadows cast on the ground would have attracted attention ; our extraordinary appearance up there would excite general curiosity, and above all, that of Messer Grande and his spies, the sole guards of Venice. Our fine scheme would soon have been disturbed by their odious interference. I therefore decided positively that we were not to creep out till the moon had set. I invoked the aid of God, and I asked for no miracle. Exposed as we were to the caprice of Fortune, I was bound to give her as few chances as possible, and if my enterprise was to fail, at any rate I would not have to reproach myself

with having made a false move. The moon would go down by about twelve o'clock, we should have seven hours of total darkness in which to act, and though we had a hard struggle before us, in seven hours we ought to get through it."

On the brink of the adventure Soradaci declined it, and well pleased must Casanova have been, for the terrors of the barber on the ascent to the leads might have knocked the bottom out of everything. Balbi's resolution held, and with him the conspirator in chief prepared to go aloft.

### III

Now this is a prodigious history. In the comedy of escapes it has a colour and atmosphere of its own, and is probably unique. What is the attitude of the reader towards it?

Sundry Casanovists, refusing to be spellbound, have probed the narrative at one point and another; but the most powerful searchlight by far has been that of Dr. Guède in the "*Mercure de France*" (1912). Dr. Guède, it may at once be said, knows more of Casanova than any other living man. He has tracked him over Europe. He went to Venice, in the spirit of a "*jugé d'instruction*," or examining magistrate, to reconstruct the scenes of the evasion.

Dr. Guède enunciates a general law of escapes. For my own part I have found it difficult to frame any law on the subject, but Dr. Guède's is to this effect: That when the celebrated escapes (with certain exceptions) are analysed, it is found that, in addition to the adroit combinations, superhuman efforts, patience, and perseverance, all the prisoners have had the connivance of persons within or without



the prison. He instances, among others, the cases of Mary Queen of Scots, Grotius, Isaac Arnauld, Cardinal de Retz, Jean Bart and Forbin, Quiquérán de Beaujeu, Trenck, and Lavalette (to all of whom some reference will be found in these pages).

It may be remarked in passing that we seem to have a few rather notable departures from the rule.

So far as we may tell, Buquoit frees himself unaided from For-l'Évêque. In getting out of the Bastille he works with fellow-prisoners, and Latude in the same place works with Allègre. But when two or more fellow-prisoners are concerned in a plot for freedom the interest of the affair is usually much enhanced. All of them are courting a risk, and the risk is often of life itself. Jack Sheppard in the greatest of his flights from Newgate seems to have had no help whatever; and the inquiry might be extended. Benvenuto Cellini's escape is open to doubt. Clearly, then, it is not without peril that we shall seek to lay down a law on the subject.

The learned French critic infers (at least, I think he does) that, when we have distinct proof of connivance, the virtue of romance has gone from the enterprise. This I am quite unable to admit. For every interest of romance it suffices that the prison-breaker, or the fugitive in act of flight, keeps the centre of the stage, and is continuously in danger, whether of mere rearrest and reimprisonment, or of his very life. Had half a dozen warders in Bitche or the Bastille winked at the stratagems of Donat O'Brien or Buquoit, the soul of the first still hung by his wretched little rope, and of the second by his frail supports of osier.

Occasionally indeed it happens that when the whole truth of an escape is revealed to us every

shred of the romantic falls from it. This is rare, but let me cite in point the most curious of modern instances. It is that of the Fenian "Head Centre," James Stephens, confined in the Richmond Bridewell, Dublin, in 1865. This was a year that really did seem to promise something for Fenianism. The Civil War in America was practically over; many Fenian officers of regiments hastened to Ireland; Cluseret, a conspirator of signal ability (he was afterwards in the Commune), arrived from France; and from Italy came Fariola. Had there been a leader of genius in Ireland, a blow might have been struck; but in the various comings and goings there was little secrecy; and an informer (one Nagle, employed as a folder in the office of the "Irish People") was steadily feeding the Government with information.

Stephens's flight from the Bridewell was long regarded as the one great romance of a not over-romantic episode; and he himself was thought the equal as a prison-breaker, not, of course, of Casanova, Trenck, or Latude, but at least of Louis Napoleon. As is now, however, matter of history, the Head Centre was simply slipped out of gaol. Two of the Bridewell warders, Byrne and Breslin, were in the plot, and, unless I am mistaken, a duplicate key from a wax impression had been manufactured by a Dublin Fenian—possibly a ticket-collector at Westland Row Station. The two warders, says Mr. James Glover,<sup>1</sup> "were able to arrange that on one of their rounds the door of Stephens's cell was to be left unlocked; the Head Centre was to be led to the prison wall. At a certain hour two pebbles from the outside would indicate the readiness of the rescuing

<sup>1</sup> "Jimmy Glover: His Book."

party, and the reply from Byrne and Breslin inside was a sod of grass thrown over the same wall. Stephens, with the aid of a rope, was then passed over into the welcome arms of his friends, which included my father." Stephens passed the remainder of the night at the Glovers' house in Kingstown. Later he escaped to France (whether in a small fishing-smack from Malahide or in a lugger from Skerries is no longer of much importance); but the Fenians as a body soon turned him over, and the control of the movement passed into other hands. Here is an escape in which the principal performer has but to walk straight out of his cell.

In the flight of Mary of Scots from Loch Leven the rôle of the Queen herself is insignificant; but how delightful to the onlooker are the manifold devices of the Little Douglas. But for the presence and expedients of Dr. Conneau and the valet Thélin, Prince Louis Napoleon might have had to linger in Ham until the Government chose to release him; but he has a central and high part in the undertaking, and sustains it worthily. John Mitchel might have failed to take his way unaided through the bush of Tasmania. This arduous, headlong course is facilitated at every stage; but Mitchel himself is always in the foreground of the picture, galloping in darkness over a wild country unknown to him—step by step it is a toss-up if he founders. And how kindly and affecting are the glimpses afforded us of shelter in a shepherd's hut, of the blazing fire in the farmhouse kitchen in that nook of far Tasmania that smells of old Ireland. These things are the gilding of the scenes of jeopardy. It was possible, perhaps—I do not know—for Captain Haldane and Lieutenant Le Mesurier to finish with-

out help their formidable journey to Lorenço Marques ; but the encountering by the wanderers of the kraal of the friendly Kaffirs is an incident the most agreeable ; and what reader does not rejoice in their greeting by the managers of the mine, and welcome the coming of good Dr. Gillespie, with his trap and his pair of bonny greys ?

What, again, of the flight of Charles II after Worcester ? There are no brighter or more animated scenes, none that yield better entertainment to the reader ; but the young sovereign in his hour of discomfiture draws help from every quarter of the compass. From dawn on September 3rd, 1651, to sunrise on October 15th, Charles was fleeing for his life. In his progress from Worcester to the sea he traversed ten counties and five hundred miles of ground. It is one of the most daring and romantic runs in history ; one of the most perilous, too ; an older man would scarcely have endured the six weeks' tremendous strain. But Charles was barely twenty-one, and a very different cavalier from the battered and cynical prince of later days. Flying and hiding he displayed a royal spirit, and was usually in very merry pin. If only for his intrepidity, endurance, and humour Prince Charlie deserved the fortune he enjoyed.

This memorable escape has given us one historic emblem. " King Charles's Oak " passed into a symbol of loyalty. The scene of the oak comes early in the drama : the young King, in a rude disguise, and with his hair cropped, squatting on a pillow amid the dripping branches, and the good woman who brings a " messe of milk " and other nourishment. All along his route Charles was fortunate in making friends.

Between September 3 and October 15 the identity of the fugitive sovereign became known, either by accident or design, to a vast number of persons ; but neither the lavish reward offered by Parliament, nor the threats of condign punishment which accompanied it, could tempt sterling men and women like the inn-keepers at Charmouth, Broadwindsor, Mere, Salisbury, and Brighton to betray him.<sup>1</sup>

Eminent and hazardous parts were played in the escape by ladies, and chiefly by those two devoted ones, Mistress Jane Lane and Mistress Juliana Coningsby. The first of these journeyed with him, often in extreme peril, from Bentley to Bristol. They shared a nag between them, the King passing as the servant of the lady, who rode behind him on a pillion, and addressed him as "Will Jackson." Under the name of "Will Jackson," or "Mr. Jackson," King Charles was known to his intimates (and in correspondence) throughout the period of his exile in France. With Dame Lane His Majesty had adventures. Among these the best known is the episode of the cook-maid and the spit, facetiously told in the "Royal Oake" broadside.

These interludes, not one of which misses its element of risk, are diversified by real dangers of every kind. Now that we have it fully laid out, the flitting from Worcester to the sea coast presents itself as a series of pitfalls evaded by handsbreadths. The Roundheads, or their spies, or their supporters are the host in the land, through which the tiny band of Royalists, with the stripling King as its centre, is

<sup>1</sup> "The Royal Miracle," a collection of rare tracts, broadsides, letters, prints, and ballads, concerning the wanderings of Charles II after the battle of Worcester (September 3–October 15, 1651). With a preface, historical introduction, appendix, bibliography, and illustrations, by A. M. Broadley.

mysteriously guided—galloping, floundering, cowering, and swanking it; detection almost sure in every town, imminent in every hamlet, and threatening in every brake and bush along the road. Nothing comes nearer to our common notion of the providential than the sudden turning of the runaways out of the Dorchester and Bridport main road into Lee Lane (whereby they escaped capture), which Fuller celebrates as the “Miraculous Divergence.”

Of some of the chief performers in this affair there are descendants at the present day. The family of Penderel-Brodhurst traces directly to the “Faithful Brothers” Penderel, the “heroes of the Royal Oak” at Boscobel.

Let us be quite candid on the subject of aid to the fugitive. Fugitive and prison-breaker must play up in proper style, not to the gallery, but to the critical spectator who has studied the rules of the game. They must in some degree be inventors in their business, must face every hazard as it arises, must show a courage for any fate, and “endure the toothache patiently.” These conditions, taken together, are all the trial that we need to impose—a trial to which not a prisoner in thousands is equal. If the conditions are met, it will be found much oftener than not that whatever help can be drawn to the escape heightens the charm of the recital, and takes nothing from the credit due to the protagonists.

We have now to see, or try to see, whether Casanova had help in the Piombi, and, if so, of what kind or kinds. In the simple and unstudied records of escapes, the whole occurrence (filling the most of one of six substantial volumes) has passed almost unquestioned. More than this, in the literature to

which the adventure belongs it has been assigned a place of classical importance. On such evidence as can be gathered, we have to ask whether Casanova has played his part to our satisfaction, or whether his appeal is to the gallery. The question will be seen to resolve itself into one of probability.

By his fascinating and audacious Memoirs, we know the man himself. Under his own pen he is braggart, gamester, thief, a taker of all chances in a career that is a revel or a nightmare of escapade, physically bold in all situations, and able on occasion to rise to the spurious moral valour of the rake who has reduced to a code his every concern of gallantry. That is, for instance, a situation without an analogue in any chronicle of amours, where Casanova, in lodgings at Madrid, thinking to make love to a pretty woman opposite, is one evening summoned to her private door and lured upstairs to remove from her bedroom the corpse of the lover whom she has just murdered. Casanova shoulders and carries out the corpse, pitches it into the river, slinks home to his rooms, and is the next day arrested by the police. He faces anything, shrinks from nothing; and, to amuse us or enthral us, will stretch a point, or a hundred points, about everything.

At the age of thirty he is laid hold of by the Inquisition and thrust into the prison of the Piombi. After a detention of fourteen months or so he in some way escapes. This escape is a signal part of the moral capital with which he sets out on his new adventures in Europe. With his abounding natural genius, his buoyancy of temperament, his effrontery, his resolve to be always—as the butler phrased it—“in the climax of society,” he carries himself from capital to capital of the fashionable world of his day

as the man, condemned for no offence, who has freed himself by his own ingenuity from the clutches of the Tribunal. Thirty-two years after the event, when he is librarian to a German prince without a library, Casanova sits down to rehearse it for posterity. The credibility of this rehearsal is the one thing of moment to us.

Not until he persuades himself that his detention in the Piombi may be of long duration does Casanova begin seriously to meditate an escape. In the chamber in which he is allowed to take exercise is a medley of objects thrown pell-mell ; and here he discovers two veritable treasures : a round iron bolt and a piece of marble whereon to sharpen it. The bolt, which is to be used as a crowbar, he hides in his easy-chair. He resolves to make a hole with it in the flooring underneath his bed. This task is very far advanced—almost completed—when Casanova is suddenly transferred to a better and roomier lodging. The excavations in his old cell are now at once laid bare. The gaoler is furious, and for a short time will hold no friendly intercourse with his prisoner. Every morning an archer is brought in to sound the walls of the new chamber, but Casanova notices that the man does not touch the ceiling, and decides to go to work at that spot. His bolt or crowbar is still concealed in the padding of his arm-chair, where the gaoler has not thought of searching for it.

On a sudden the behaviour of the gaoler is greatly modified. Not only does he relent, he even makes overtures to Casanova ; and this notwithstanding that he has but just had a very practical warning as to the kind of prisoner with whom he is dealing. This brings us to the episode of the interchange of books. The reader will not have failed to remark



that the books passing between Casanova and Balbi become a sort of letter-box ; and Lorenzo, the gaoler of the Inquisition, is the postman. Now, books are a well-known medium of communication between prisoners, and every work circulated in our own prisons has the fore and end leaves, margins, and all blank spaces stamped over with the " broad arrow." Casanova has already been detected in a daring attempt to break out of the Piombi ; yet the very gaoler who has detected him is now daily carrying books to and fro between this prisoner and another, and never thinking to examine them for contraband matter.

Balbi is now taken into partnership. Betwixt cell and cell an active correspondence goes forward. Projects are considered and debated.<sup>1</sup> The escape is to be made by the ceiling. Casanova cannot pierce his own because his walls are sounded every day by the archer. He will, however, despatch his crowbar to Balbi, who is to deceive Lorenzo as to his work by bestrewing all the place with pictures of saints. On arriving above Casanova's ceiling, Balbi will break through the wall of separation of the two cells, and then make a hole in Casanova's ceiling. This accomplished, Casanova undertakes the rest.

But how to get the crowbar into Balbi's hands ? Casanova thinks of sending it in the back of a folio of the Scriptures. This will not do, for the bolt is a couple of inches too long. Then he has the notion of the monster dish of macaroni, to be placed on top of the Bible ; and we have seen how the least suspicious and most obliging of gaolers carries the double

<sup>1</sup> I have, of course, been compelled to present in a very condensed form the voluminous narrative of Casanova. He would have us believe that many letters travelled between Balbi and himself.

offering to Casanova's friends. Balbi, now in possession of the precious implement, begins operations, and rapidly achieves, without let or hindrance, a labour that, in the circumstances, would have broken the heart of a master mason. For, be it remembered, Casanova had not succeeded in bringing away from his first cell the indispensable bit of marble, and the magical crowbar must long ere this have been blunter than any poker.

These, to the point arrived at in the narrative, are our main heads : I need no farther recapitulate.

Here truly are portentous goings on in a prison administered by the dragons of the Inquisition. On the side of control, is this habitual carelessness, is this dull or humorous indifference a probable character of the management of such a place ? At the period of Casanova's detention we shall not find in Europe any methodical government of gaols ; but is the Piombi, the State prison of the alert, severe, and prepotent Inquisition under such sickly supervision as this ? Is there no governor of the Piombi ? Casanova's narrative does not refer us to any superior officer. Is the prison of the Inquisition—an unscrupulous and omnipotent oligarchy in the bosom of a Republic—at the mercy of Lorenzo, who is the clown of Casanova's racy chronicle ? Have we no more in his pages than the matter of a new " Beggar's Opera " ? Is Casanova's Piombi on a level with Gay's Newgate ? Lorenzo may be the finest numskull that ever turned key in lock ; and to the credibility of Casanova's history it is essential that he was. But was he ?

The first pieces in the case are the slab of marble and the round iron bolt. With these the story starts, and on these in great measure it depends. Dr. Guède

will have nothing to say to either of them ; dismisses both. He admits that, amid the lumber of an attic on an upper floor of the prison, a disused iron bolt of a cell might very easily be found ; but, on consideration, he rejects it as a fiction of Casanova's. With the interesting and useful piece of marble he has no patience at all. It could not possibly, he says, have been conveyed from the basement of the palace (of which the prison was a part) to the floor above. The scrap of marble is, in Casanova's story, the complement of the iron bolt ; and it is with these two instruments that the digging begins. Dr. Guède is firmly convinced that there was no digging at all.

It is a shrewd conjecture, and the learned doctor may be right. But to me it seems that, with the exception of the breaking up of the layer of mosaic, there is not in the first part of Casanova's story any vital improbability. Of course there should have been no iron bolt in the attic, and no complementary bit of marble. But the bolt, at least, may well have been flung there by some careless hand ; and if, as we are told, there were bits of old furniture in the place, is it not at all events possible that a small slab of marble was (by mere accident, if the reader pleases) carried up among them ? Lorenzo, to be sure, ought to have seen and pounced on both ; but prisoners before and after Casanova's day have made very lucky finds. Was Captain Haldane, when he looked into the cupboard at the Staats Model School, expecting a booty of files, screw-drivers, and wire-cutters ?

Casanova, contemplating flight, may not at first know or suspect that help of the right, golden sort is to be furnished to him. If, then, he has really

picked up, under Lorenzo's very nose, the bolt and the blessed touchstone, what is more natural for him to do than to start delving? Given the situation, this is, in fact, his proper course.

If, however, there is no digging, we must seek a solution elsewhere. Persuaded as he is that almost never does a prisoner escape without assistance inside or outside the prison, Dr. Guède examines the case from this point of view. He decides that not Casanova's crowbar but somebody's golden sequins are at work. He decides for bribery and corruption. Who is the briber? None but the *Senator amplissime*, Bragadino. Who is the party bribed? Chiefly Lorenzo.

Here undoubtedly, I think, Dr. Guède smites the right nail on the head. Under this theory is explained well-nigh everything in the narrative that is dubious, and everything that seems downright impossible. Let us have the truth of it, though we sacrifice the rarest tale of its kind that ever yet was written. Bragadino, pining for the gay companionship of his adopted son, will go to any length to get him out of the Piombi. From the first the old man has been attentive to him, sending now a basket of sweet lemons, now "a nice roast fowl," and on New Year's Day a dressing-gown lined with fox-skin, a coverlet of wadded silk, and a bear-skin foot-muff. Having no doubt felt his path with caution, he begins actively bribing. Balbi, writing with amazing rashness to Casanova, tells him that Bragadino had promised to an archer named Niccolò "a thousand sequins<sup>1</sup> if he could help you to make your escape; but Lorenzo, having heard this, flatters himself that

<sup>1</sup> A very fair sum, if the sequin was worth between nine and ten shillings.

he can gain the reward without any risk by making his wife obtain your release from Signor Diedo." This plan, if attempted, is not brought off; but Lorenzo, taking a greater risk, will now put himself in direct communication with the gentleman who is so lavish of his sequins. After all, cannot he, Lorenzo, do a great deal more for the prisoner than any archer?

Do we begin to see daylight? It is still, as I contend, a plausible suggestion that Casanova has been at his digging, and that the terrified gaoler has flown into a passion over it. Surprisingly soon, however, his passion has evaporated. He ceases to be the sulky, jealous, and watchful keeper of a bird that has tried to shatter its cage, and that will doubtless try again. He grows friendly, and in his friendliness does what no prudent warder, in the common situation of warders, would for a moment dream of doing. He makes himself a go-between in a matter of books, and never peeps into them. But the situation has changed. It is no longer a common situation of warders. From the coffers of Bragadino to the pockets of Lorenzo the sequins have begun to flow; and from this beatific hour everything conforms to the theory of handsome bribery. We have no more discoveries of gaping holes, no more tempests of passion. Three quiet prisoners of a literary or studious turn solace their captivity with books of a curious or pious nature (some of Casanova's titles are delicious); and the kindest of turnkeys takes on him the office of librarian. Quite the sedatest and happiest little family the terrible Piombi can ever have contained!

Consider now the propositions of the great dish of macaroni and the sacred pictures on the ceiling of Balbi and the fat Count. No reader, I trust, has

a stomach for the M'Arony.<sup>1</sup> Sorry as we may be for Balbi and Count Asquino, I think we must consider that this refection was not set before them. Casanova, his history of the escape being what it is, has no choice but to exhibit Lorenzo as a Partridge at the play. But a Lorenzo fingering the gold pieces of the Senator is under no necessity of playing the egregious fool. And the pictures on the ceiling? I have wandered through many prisons, and shall mildly say that this form of decoration is distressingly unusual. Holy emblems for his walls the monk (who, by the way, proclaims himself the father of three illegitimate children) might by favour of Lorenzo have procured; but does a prisoner, by plastering it with prints, implore attention to the ceiling he is piercing? and does a warder come in every morning, and admire these works, and walk out again? It is a beautiful and fascinating story.

But the moon has sunk in the heavens. All dark and misty Venice lies. It is time to decamp. There are "pippins and cheese to come."

#### IV

"I crawled out first; Balbi following. Soradaci, who had accompanied us to the roof, was ordered to pull the sheet of lead down again and then to go and pray to Saint Francis. Crawling on my knees on all fours, I gripped my crowbar, and, stretching as far as I could, I slipped it obliquely between the points of the sheets; then, grasping the edge of the sheet I had turned up, I dragged myself up to the ridge of the roof. The friar, to follow me, inserted

<sup>1</sup> Thackeray's "Yellowplush Papers."

the fingers of his right hand into the belt of my breeches. Thus I had the double task of a beast which drags and carries both at once, and that on a steep roof, made slippery by a dense fog. Half-way up this dreadful climb Balbi bid me stop, for one of his parcels had fallen, and he hoped it might not have gone further than the gutter. My first impulse was to give him a kick and send him after his bundle ; but, God be praised, I had enough self-command not to do this, for the punishment would have been too severe for both of us, since I alone could never have escaped.

“ After having with infinite pains surmounted some fifteen or sixteen sheets of lead, we reached the summit of the roof. I seated myself comfortably astride it, and Balbi followed suit. Behind us lay the little isle of San Giorgio Maggiore, and some two hundred paces in front we beheld the many cupolas of Saint Mark.

“ Right and left I peered for some minutes ; then, bidding Balbi await my return, I advanced, crowbar in hand, with very little difficulty along the roof. For an hour or more I pushed to and fro, prying vainly here and there. Nowhere did I see anything to which a cord could be attached. My perplexity was extreme. I could not for a moment think of the canal, nor of the palace courtyard, and among the many cupolas of the church I saw nothing but precipitous walls leading to no open space. To get beyond the church to the Canonica I should have had to surmount such steep slopes that I had no hope of achieving it, and it was natural that I should reject as impossible everything that did not seem feasible. The situation in which I found myself required daring, but absolutely no rashness. It was

such a dilemma as I imagine can have no parallel for difficulty in any moral question.

“ However, I had to come to some conclusion ; I must either get away or return to my cell, never probably to leave it again ; or, again, throw myself into the canal. In this predicament a great deal must be left to chance, and I must begin somewhere. I fixed my eyes on a dormer window on the side towards the canal, and about two-thirds of the way down. It was far enough from the spot we had started from to make me think that the loft it lighted was not connected with the prison I had broken out of. It could light only an attic, inhabited or vacant, over some room in the palace, where, when day should dawn, the doors no doubt would be opened. I was morally certain that the attendants in the palace, even those of the Doge himself, who should happen to see us, would be eager to favour our escape rather than place us in the hands of justice, even if they had recognised us as the greatest of State criminals, so horrible was the Inquisition in their eyes.

“ With this idea I decided on inspecting that window, so, letting myself slip gently down, I soon was astride on the little roof. Then, resting my hands on the edge, I stretched my head out and succeeded in seeing and touching a little barred grating, behind which there was a window glazed with small panes set in lead. The window did not trouble me, but the grating, slight as it was, seemed to me an insurmountable difficulty, for without a file I could not get through the bars, and I only had my crowbar. I was checked, and began to lose heart, when a perfectly simple and natural incident revived my spirit.



“ It was the clock of St. Mark’s striking midnight. The sound was as a spoken charm, summoning me to action and promising success. Lying flat on the roof, with my head over the edge, I pushed my bar in above the frame which held the grating, determined to dislodge it bodily. In a quarter of an hour I had succeeded ; the grating was in my hands unbroken, and having laid it by the side of the dormer I had no difficulty in breaking in the window, though the blood was flowing from a wound I had made in my left hand.

“ By the help of my bar I got back to the ridge of the roof in the same way as before, and made my way back to where I had left my companion. I found him desperate and raging ; he abused me foully for having left him there so long. He declared he was only waiting for seven to strike to go back to prison.

“ ‘ What did you think had become of me ? ’

“ ‘ I thought you had fallen down some roof or wall.’

“ ‘ And you have no better way of expressing your joy at my return than by abusing me ? ’

“ ‘ What have you been doing all this time ? ’

“ ‘ Come with me and you will see.’

“ Having gathered up my bundles, I made my way back to the window. When we were just over it I explained to Balbi exactly what I had done, and consulted him as to how we were to get into the loft through the window. The thing was quite easy for one of us ; the other could let him down. But I did not see how the second man was to follow him, as there was no way of fixing the rope above the window. By going in and letting myself drop I might break my legs and arms, for I did not know the height of

the window above the floor. To this wise argument, spoken with perfect friendliness, the pig replied in these words :

“ ‘ Let me down, at any rate, and when I am in there you will have plenty of time to find out how you can follow me.’

“ I confess that in my first impulse of indignation I was ready to stab him with my crowbar. A good genius saved me from doing so, and I did not even utter one word of reproach for his selfishness and baseness.

“ On the contrary, I at once unrolled my bundle of rope, and fastening it firmly under his armpits I made him lie flat on his face, his feet outwards, and then let him down on to the roof of the dormer. When he was there, I made him go over the edge and into the window as far as his hips, leaving his arms on the sill. I next slipped down to the little roof, as I had done before, lay down on my stomach, and holding the rope firmly, told the monk to let himself go without fear. When he had landed on the floor of the attic he undid the rope, and I, pulling it up, found that the height was above fifty feet. To jump this was too great a risk. As for the monk, now he was safe, after nearly two hours of anguish on a roof, where, I must own, his situation was far from comfortable, he called out to me to throw in the ropes, and he would take care of them. I, as may be supposed, took good care not to follow this absurd injunction. Not knowing what to do, and awaiting some inspiration, I clambered once more to the ridge, and my eye falling on a spot near a cupola, which I had not yet examined, I made my way thither. I saw a little terrace or platform covered with lead, close to a large window closed with shutters. There

was here a tub full of wet mortar with a trowel, and by the side a ladder, which I thought would be long enough to enable me to get down into the attic where my comrade was. This settled the question. I slipped my rope through the top rung, and dragged this awkward load as far as the window. I then had to get the heavy load into the window. It was twelve of my cubits [*douze de mes brasses*] in length. The difficulty I had in doing it made me repent of having deprived myself of Balbi's assistance. I pushed the ladder along till one end was on the level of the dormer and the other projected by a third beyond the gutter. Then I slid down on to the dormer roof; I drew the ladder close to my side and fastened the rope to the eighth rung, after which I again allowed it to slip till it was parallel with the window. Then I did all I could to make it slip into the window, but I could not get it beyond the fifth rung because the end caught against the inner roof of the dormer, and no power on earth could get it any further without breaking either the ladder or the roof. There was nothing for it but to tilt the outer end, then the slope would allow it to slide in by its own weight. I might have placed the ladder across the window and have fastened the rope to it to let myself down, without any risk; but the ladder would have remained there, and next morning would have guided the archers and Lorenzo to the spot where we might still be hiding.

“ I would not run the risk of losing by such an act of imprudence the fruit of so much labour and peril, and to conceal all our traces the ladder must be got entirely into the window. Having no one to help me, I decided on getting down to the gutter to tilt it, and attain my end. This in fact I did, but at so great

a risk that but for a sort of miracle I should have paid for my daring with my life. I ventured to leave go of the cord that was attached to the ladder without any fear of its falling into the canal, because it was caught on the gutter by the third rung. Then, with my crowbar in my hand, I cautiously let myself slide down to the gutter by the side of the ladder; the marble ledge was against my toes, for I let myself down with my face to the roof. In this attitude I found strength enough to lift the ladder a few inches, and I had the satisfaction of seeing it go a foot further in. As the reader will understand, this diminished its weight very perceptibly. What I now wanted was to get it two feet further in, by lifting it enough; for after that I felt sure that, by climbing up to the roof of the dormer once more, I could, with the help of the rope, get it all the way in. To achieve this, I raised myself from my knees; but the force I was obliged to use to succeed made me slip, so that I suddenly found myself over the edge of the roof as far as my chest, supported only by my elbows.

“It was an awful moment, which to this day I shudder to think of, and which it is perhaps impossible to conceive of in all its horror. The natural instinct of self-preservation made me almost unconsciously lean with all my might, supporting myself on my ribs, and I succeeded—miraculously, I felt inclined to say. Taking care not to relax my hold, I managed to raise myself with all the strength of my wrists, leaning at the same time on my stomach. Happily there was nothing to fear for the ladder, for the lucky—or rather the unlucky push which had cost me so dear, had sent it in more than three feet, which fixed it firmly.

“Finding myself resting on the gutter literally on my wrists and my groin, I found that by moving my right side I could raise first one knee and then the other on to the parapet. Then I should be safe. However, my troubles were not yet over, for the strain I was obliged to exert in order to succeed gave me such a nervous spasm that a violent attack of painful cramp seemed to cripple me completely. I did not lose my head, and remained perfectly still till the spasm was over, knowing that perfect stillness is the best cure for nervous cramps—I had often found it so. It was a frightful moment. A few minutes after I gradually renewed my efforts. I succeeded in getting my knees against the gutter, and as soon as I had recovered my breath I carefully raised the ladder, and at last got it to the angle where it was parallel with the window. Knowing enough of the laws of equilibrium and the lever, I now picked up my crowbar, and climbing in my old fashion, I hauled myself up to the roof and easily succeeded in tilting in the ladder, which the monk below received in his arms. I then flung in my clothes, the ropes, and the broken pieces, and got down into the attic, where Balbi received me very heartily and took care to remove the ladder.”

Together, and as best they could in the dark, they proceeded to a survey of the room. It measured, says Casanova, about thirty paces by twenty. At one end they came upon a folding-door barred with iron. It promised badly, but yielded to a little pressure. Traversing the next apartment they knocked up against a large table. Groping on, they came to a window, opened it, and had a dim vision of precipices between the cupolas. Closing the window, they made their way back to the spot where

they had left their packages. Here Casanova, his forces spent, drooped to the floor, and fell fast asleep. Three hours and a half he slept, when the monk in alarm shook him into consciousness. He rose up refreshed, and glanced around. The light was growing. "This is no prison," exclaimed Casanova; "there must be an easy way out."

In a corner opposite the iron door he espied another door, and his fingers fell upon the keyhole. Inserting the crowbar, he wrenched the door open, and now they were in a small room where a key lay on the table. With this key he opened another door opposite, and they passed into a gallery where many recesses were stored with papers. These were the archives. Next they discovered a little stone staircase, down which they crept; another, and this also they descended. At the bottom was a glass door, which let Casanova into a room that he recognised. It was the chancery office of the Doge.

He tried a lock of the door, and, failing to pierce it, decided on breaking through a panel.

"In half an hour the hole was large enough, luckily, for to make it wider a saw would have been needed. The edges of the gap were all jagged, and horrid to behold. It was five feet from the ground. Placing two chairs beneath it, we mounted on them, and I pushed the monk through. It was still somewhat dark, but I now knew where we were. Handing our bundles out to Balbi, I placed a third chair on top of the first two, and told him to grip and haul me through, even though he tore me to pieces in doing so. My legs and thighs were, indeed, so lacerated that the blood flowed from them. I was, however, on the right side at last. Picking up my bundle, and descending two flights of steps, I had no trouble

with the door below. This leads to the corridor where is the great entrance to the royal staircase, and beside it the door of the *Savio alla scrittura*. A glance assured me that nothing but a catapult or a mine would level these barriers; and my good crowbar seemed to tell me that my work was finished.

“Resigned and absolutely tranquil, I sat me down, making a sign to the monk to do the same. ‘My task is done,’ said I. ‘The rest is with God or fortune. Whether the sweepers will come here to-day—All Saints’ Day—or to-morrow—All Souls’ Day—I know not. This I do know, should anyone at all come, I am up, off, and away the very instant the door is open. Follow me, you. If there come no one, here I bide; yes, though I die of hunger.’

“At this discourse the poor wretch fell to raving, called me madman, liar, betrayer. I let him rave; there was no moving me.”

The next thing to think of was a change of raiment. Balbi, says Casanova, had the air of a peasant, but his clothes were at any rate intact. As for Casanova himself, he was tattered and gory. With handkerchiefs torn into bandages he gave first aid to his wounds; then gathered his hair into a bag or purse, pulled on white stockings, and donned the holiday coat with which in bravado he had entered the Piombi. He must have looked, as he remarks, like a gallant who had begun the night at a ball, wound it up at a gaming-house, and issued thence the worse for his share in a rough-and-tumble. His silken cloak he draped around the shoulders of Balbi, who had now the style of a thief in a hurry. Robert Macaire and Jacques Strop to the life!

Thus happily geared for the road, Casanova boldly throws up a window.

“ My face was at once observed by some idlers in the palace courtyard, who, puzzled to imagine how such a person could be at that window so early in the morning, went to inform the keeper of the key. The door-keeper, fancying that he must have locked someone in the day before, went to fetch his keys, and came to open. I was vexed at having shown myself at the window, not knowing that in this fortune had befriended me ; and I was sitting by the monk, who was talking nonsense, when the rattle of keys fell on my ear. Greatly excited, I rose, and putting my eye to a crack which happily divided the hinges of the door, I saw one man only, slowly coming up the steps with a bunch of large keys in his hand. I desired Balbi very earnestly not to say a word, to keep behind me, and follow me closely. I took my crowbar, holding it in my right hand hidden in my coat, and I placed myself in such a position with regard to the door as that I could fly the instant it was opened, and rush down the steps. I prayed heaven that the man might not show fight, for if he had I must have struck him down, and I was fully determined to do so.

“ The door was opened, and on seeing me the poor man stood petrified. Taking advantage of his amazement, without pausing, without speaking a word, I quickly went down the steps, the monk following me. Without looking as if I were running away, but walking at a good pace, I went by the magnificent Giant’s Staircase, not listening to Balbi, who kept calling to me : ‘ Come into the church ! ’

“ The door of the church is not twenty yards from the great stairs ; but the churches of Venice were no longer, even then, a sanctuary for criminals, and



no one took refuge there. This Balbi knew, but in his terror he had lost his memory. He told me afterwards that what urged him to press me to go into the church was a religious impulse which drew him to the altar.

“ ‘ Why did you not go alone, then ? ’ ”

“ ‘ I would not forsake you. ’ ”

“ Better had he said : ‘ I would not lose sight of you. ’ ”

The asylum divined of Casanova lay well beyond the frontiers of the Most Serene Republic. He penetrated to it ; and since the final passages, full as they are of chance and charm, entail no new arrest, it is time, in releasing Casanova, to release the reader. We have a flight by gondola to Mestre. At Mestre a carriage is hired for Treviso, and the start is delayed while Casanova stalks Balbi to a bar and a barmaid. There are other quarrels on the road ; and at one place Casanova proposes to slay and bury the monk instantly. They separate, fall together once again at Borgo di Valsugnano (the first town beyond the Republic) ; and at this stage Balbi vanishes from Casanova's pages, and we never meet him again. He is a live creature in the record ; and in the plot itself—whatever the plot amounts to—his part may have been better than we know. It is the prime business of Casanova to seize and keep the centre of the stage, and to drop the lights on everybody else. On foot and by donkey-back he fares to Munich ; and presently turns up in Paris.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Where long extracts have been made for me, I have had partial recourse (after comparing it with Casanova's French) to an excellent translation by Miss Clara Bell.

## V

I have suggested that some of the most enlivening and original escapes are exceedingly unlike the work of the novelist. The escape of Casanova, on the other hand, where it does not strike the reader as pure extravaganza, is in the manner and has the atmosphere of pure romance. Never for a moment does the spirit of the story droop or falter ; but the foot it trips upon is always of the airiest, and the whole adventure is perilously close to unreality.

The scene on the leads is equal to the best of Dumas. Casanova has written up this situation for all that he is worth, and every stroke tells. It goes straight to the nerves. It is filled with the horror of the empty air.

Alas ! it is all a fetch, a flam, a diddle. The un-bashful gamester has cheated at play. He has cogged the dice, and cozened us.

In what way he really did leave the Piombi is now past the wit of man to say. But it was not in the way that he pretends. For if Casanova has dished his readers, he now in turn (in what dim hinterland of life he bides) is dished by Dr. Guède.

Note-book in hand, Dr. Guède makes his leisurely ascent to the leads, surveys these interesting heights, takes measurements, interviews workmen on the spot, weighs up the hazards and the chances of that pregnant night of mists, and says, in effect : " I am sorry, gentlemen Casanovists, but beyond a doubt James has again been at his tricks. This scarifying performance on the roof is the greatest taradiddle of all. *Jamie iss an awfu' leear !* "

In truth, if the reader's intelligence has not been

quite stormed by Casanova's breathless record of the flight, there are things in it that must have set him gaping. When Balbi has been lowered by the rope through the window, and touches to the floor of the room, Casanova jauntily remarks to us that the height was "more than fifty feet." Everything, in short, is on a scale to dazzle us. But has Giovanni Jacopo no eye at all to posterity—or at least to Dr. Guède and his magistral note-book? For the floor of the lowest storey of the Piombi is only some half-dozen metres, or, say, nineteen feet and a half, below the top of the roof!

But this is a bagatelle to the prowess of Casanova with the ladder. This he says categorically was twelve of his cubits. Exactly what we are to understand by this measurement—"douze de mes brasses"—it is hard to surmise. Another French critic, Bernard, preceding Guède by many years, thinks that cubit here tallies with the cordwainer's cubit. But this gives us a ladder two hundred and forty-seven yards long. This would be a simple and proper appendage of the doll's house of little Glumdalclitch; but we are not now in the confines of Brobdingnag; we are on the roof of the Piombi, and in need of such a ladder as a fugitive of mortal inches may manipulate. Is any ladder constructed of the length, not of two hundred and forty-seven yards, but of one hundred and thirty or one hundred and forty yards? But the man is not of our planet who raises and propels with his own hands and arms a ladder of this size. It is a new labour of Hercules. "You are a devil at everything," cries Sancho to Don Quixote, "and there is no kind of thing in the 'versal world but what you can turn your hand to." It is what Casanova himself would hint to posterity;

his tongue in his cheek, in the library of the German prince who has not a book on his shelves.

His getting downstairs with Balbi detains us a moment. How does he attack a keyhole with a blunted crowbar? How, with a blunted crowbar, does he make a round hole (with jagged edges) in the solid panel of a door? He is here, it would seem, in domestic parts of the palace, and day has long dawned, and servants must be stirring; but no one hears him pounding on the door.

That is a rather tempting word of his own concerning the archives in the corridor, but no paper has been discovered on the topic of this flight. The pungent and absorbing memoirs of the man himself, with the soundings of them by a few critics of consideration, are all the data we can go by. He escaped from the Piombi. This is as much as we know. How far Lorenzo was in it at the last we cannot tell.

But what became of Lorenzo? This is a point, of more than secondary concern in the history, which Dr. Guède does not notice. If Lorenzo helps Casanova out of the Piombi, as almost certainly he does, who helps out Lorenzo? For Lorenzo could not remain there a day after him. He stands within the danger of the Inquisitors, the proceedings of whose court were conducted with the utmost secrecy, and who disposed of their prisoners as they pleased. There were subterranean dungeons of the prison, the "*Piozzi*," mere wells, in which the prisoner contested life with rats and the waters of the canal. There were the galleys. There was sudden and secret execution by any means. Lorenzo, in a word, loosing Casanova, must instantly vacate the premises. Is Bragadino the man behind it all? If so, having

freed Casanova, he takes charge of Lorenzo, and wafts him somewhere out of Venice.

Time, it has been said, is an "unsportsmanlike operator," and Casanova's grave is spoiled. But he has at least composed for us an inimitable tale. His wit and charm are a kind of possession; and thus much may be laid in tribute on his "exhilarating tombstone."



### III

## FROM SIBERIA TO PARIS

### THE GREAT FLIGHT OF RUFIN PIETROWSKI

*“Thy spirit, Independence, let me share ;  
Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye,  
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare  
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky.”*

SMOLLETT'S *Ode to Independence.*

*“Eas'd the putting off  
These troublesome disguises which we wear.”—MILTON.*





## FROM SIBERIA TO PARIS

### I

IN the year 1842 Rufin Pietrowski, a young Pole of noble birth, lay sick in the Paris hospital of *La Pitié*. From this extreme outpost of exile he had long meditated a secret return to his own country. Pietrowski was a soldier of the '31. In 1831 he had contended against Russia in the rebellion that ended so wretchedly for Poland. Emigrating, or rather banishing himself, to France, he had lived in Paris for twelve years. He was sick, and homesick.

In his ward of the hospital Pietrowski made friends with an American patient, to whom he disclosed his project. To reach Poland from Paris a passport, genuine or counterfeit, was indispensable; and this *Open Sesame* of road and frontier Pietrowski had never managed to procure. A passport was secretly got for him by the American; and on January 9, 1843, the exile set out from Paris. The passport he carried was an English one, made out in the name of "Joseph Catharo, native of La Valette (Malta), aged 36."

"I could desire nothing better," says Pietrowski. "In my situation an English passport was preferable to any other. I spoke Italian perfectly, English very imperfectly; but my supposed Maltese antecedents would make good any failings on that score."

For the needs of his immense journey he had scraped together a sum of about £6.

Through Strasburg, Stuttgart, Munich, Salzburg and Vienna, Pietrowski took his route to Pesth; and from Pesth, after a month's sojourn—the £6 ebbing daily—he completed the pilgrimage on foot. His goal was Kaminieç, in Podolia; and into this town he entered on the 22nd of March. A Pole in Paris, Pietrowski was a Frenchman in Kaminieç. With his native tongue clattering around him, he did not as yet dare to utter a word of it. He pushed his fortune as a teacher of languages, secured appointments, became known—as “the Frenchman”—to everyone; and stealthily revealed himself to a small number of his compatriots. For nine months Pietrowski lived this dubious and dangerous life in Kaminieç; delighting in it, and ignoring the dangers of it; because, although perpetually in hiding, he was still at home. As a fighter on the Polish side in the revolution of 1831, he was liable to arrest as a criminal by the Russian Government. Rumours against him spread from St. Petersburg. He was seized, tried, and condemned to death.

“This sentence, which was long and minutely drawn up, finished with ‘the pain of death,’ commuted, however, by Prince Bibikov, for that of penal servitude in Siberia for the term of my natural life. I was, in addition, degraded from the ranks of the nobility, and I was to make the journey in fetters. After having heard this document, I was ordered to write at the bottom of the paper the following words: ‘Rufin Pietrowski heard this sentence on the 29th of July, O.S., 1844.’”

On the evening of this day Pietrowski started for Siberia.

## II

As a noble, he was exempted from trudging on foot those infinite miles from his Russian prison to his unknown destination in Siberia. Common criminals condemned to hard labour (among whom were many women) travelled in this way under escort from station to station, day by day through all seasons; and if their goal were the mines of Nertchinsk, in the remote government of Irkoutsk, scarcely could they attain it in two years. Pietrowski on his own journey met many of these caravans; Cossacks riding slowly up and down the line; "a mournful silence reigning in the groups, broken only by the dull noise of their chains."

Compared with the lot of this "herd of the lost" his own state, he says, was endurable; but in the *kibitka* in which he was rapidly driven from one convict posting-house to another the rings of his fetters, too tightly fastened, pained him incessantly, and he suffered from constant sickness. Sometimes, half-dazed at one of his stopping-places, he was vaguely aware of the compassionate glances of bystanders of both sexes, and little presents of cakes, dried fish, or fruits were surreptitiously thrust upon him. Now and again, during the long stages of day or night, the guards on either side of him in the carriage fell fast asleep, and at rough places in the road he caught the caps as they were jerked from their heads. At one halting-place the postmaster combined this character with that of village priest (*pope*); tipping brandy, he alternately denounced and gave his blessing to the weary prisoner. Save for meals and the changing of horses, Pietrowski's progress knew no stoppage along the road by which

ten thousand prisoners of the Czar were every year transported. "Day and night we drove."

"Going at the rate of about sixty-six *verstes* or *kilomètres* a day, I had traversed in succession the governments of Tchernigov, Orel, Toula, Riazan, Vladimir, Nijni-Novgorod, Kazan, Viatka and Perm; I had passed the mountain chains of Oural and Tobolsk, and I found myself, at the end of twenty days, transported from the fertile plains of Poland to the very centre of Siberia-West."

On a night of August he was received into "a sort of castle," where he had for gaoler a handsome young French-speaking officer who, in chat with his prisoner, unrolled before him a complete map of Siberia.

"This I examined with feverish curiosity; I had all the marks explained to me; I studied and strove to fix in my memory the different routes and watersheds of the country. My heart beat violently, and I could not take my eyes off the map. At last the officer noticed my agitation. 'Ah!' he said, 'I fear you meditate an evasion; pray, pray do not think of it; it is perfectly impossible. Many of your countrymen have tried it, and those may be said to have been happy who, tracked on every side, tortured by hunger, and maddened by despair, have yet been able to escape the consequences of their crazy undertaking by a timely suicide. The consequences are certain to be the *knout*, and a life of misery such as I have no words to describe to you. For God's sake, put all such thoughts from your mind!'"

It was at this station, Omsk, that Pietrowski received his final marching orders and way-bill. Prince Gortchakov, Governor-General of Siberia,

assigned him his *settlement*. The hell of the Siberian convict had many circles in those days ; and Pietrowski, sitting in an ante-chamber, debated with himself his chances of the mines of Nertchinsk. He was informed that he would be sent to the works at the Government distilleries, at Ekaterinski-Zavod, in the district of Tara, on the banks of the Irtyche, some three hundred kilometres from Omsk. At this place he arrived on a raw morning in October.

## III

In an office of the works, while awaiting the orders of the inspector, Pietrowski was greeted with silent emotion by two young Polish clerks, exiles and convicts like himself. "They conjured me to show myself patient and submissive in every way. It was only thus that I could arrive in time at being employed in the office, instead of having to do the hard and severe work of the factory itself ; and at this price, above all, I could purchase an immunity from those corporal punishments to which every labouring convict is liable. I cannot describe what was the character of this broken and breathless colloquy, or the shiver which ran through my frame when I heard Polish lips speaking, as a matter of course, of their fear of blows and of the rods."

Prince Gortchakov had given instructions that "a special watch must be kept upon Pietrowski," and the inspector in consequence ordered him to work with chains on his feet. He had for overseer a convict who was branded on the forehead and on both cheeks ; and among his associates were two murderers who, having lived through the punishment of the knout, were to end their days in Siberia.

In his affecting and fascinating "Story of a Siberian Exile" the young Polish noble is seen working patiently with felons; sweeping yards, drawing water, hewing wood for fagots and stacking the fagots in symmetrical piles; "and this last employment in the open air, in the autumnal and winter months, in rain and snow, and in the icy temperature of Siberia, was the most trying of any."

The whole population of Ekaterinski-Zavod consisted of the descendants of former convicts; and in the works in which Pietrowski was employed all the prisoners save a few political offenders like himself "were really malefactors." He says that in his enforced daily intercourse with them he had neither a false shame nor a misplaced pride; he talked to them, listened to their strange and moving histories, and studied their different characters.

In the course of a year, at the good pleasure of the inspector, he passed into the service of the lessees of the establishment, and was presently admitted—without his chains—to the counting-house. This department "was the rendezvous of many travellers, who frequented it both for the sale of grain and for the purchase of spirits. They were peasants, townsfolk, merchants, Russians, Tartars, Jews, and Kirghis. If I was very scant of speech, and short in my communication with the official, with the other convicts, and with the custom-house officers, I acquired, on the contrary, with a curiosity that never flagged, from all these passing travellers, everything that could be learnt concerning the peculiarities of Siberia. I spoke to men some of whom had been to Berezov, others at Nertchinsk, others had penetrated to the frontiers of China, to Kamschatka, to the *steppes* of the Kirghis, even

into Boukhara. Thus, without passing the threshold of my office, I learned to know Siberia, its nearest and its furthest details. The knowledge thus gained was to be of great value to me afterwards in shaping my plan of escape."

In this sad and soul-killing settlement on the banks of the Irtiche, Pietrowski mounted rapidly from the lowest to the highest status to which a Siberian convict can ascend. He was given permission to live out of barracks, and dwelt henceforth with two fellow-clerks and fellow-countrymen in a wooden hut which one of them, Siésieke, had constructed. It was unfinished, not even roofed in. "The wind whistled through numberless chinks, but as wood cost next to nothing, we piled up a great fire on the hearth every night; and there we could feel not only that we were at home, but that we were delivered from the horrible company of the common criminals. . . . Ah! if that little house is still standing, and shelters perhaps at this moment some unhappy and deported brother, let him know that he is not the first or the only one who within its modest walls has wept as he invoked a distant and beloved land!"

His mind was ceaselessly occupied with the thought of flight. True, the lot of Pietrowski and his fellow "politicals" was less terrible than that of many others in the savage depths of Siberia. Worse than Ekaterinski-Zavod were the mines of Nertchinsk; worse than Nertchinsk was Orenbourg; worst of all was the fortress of Akatouia, the very name of which, throughout Siberia, "is pronounced with an indescribable terror."

But the life was one of daily suffering and ignominy. Political offenders and common criminals alike were

despised by the inhabitants of the country ; and the exile often heard himself insulted with the name of *varnak*, an expression “ which conveys a concentrated notion of abjectness and infamy.” The exile had no civil rights ; his deposition was refused in a court of justice ; his wife, if he had left one behind, was at liberty to contract a second marriage—the exile being reckoned with the dead.

Yet, for all the temptation to flight, rarely was it embraced by a political exile or a Pole. Failure was rewarded with the knout ; a prisoner of delicate or sensitive habit would lose consciousness at the third stroke, and life itself sometimes at the fifth. Again, the Polish prisoner in flight was at a grievous disadvantage with the Russian peasant. His knowledge of the language, manners, and routes of the country was imperfect. A stranger in a land of boundless woods and wilds, where, through the long winter, trees become frozen to the heart and rivers to their depth, and snowstorms overwhelm both man and beast, he must feel his way league by league over immense and unfamiliar tracts, reaching and crossing the confines of another continent, pursued by soldiery and police, and everywhere visited with suspicion.

From this immeasurable enterprise Pietrowski did not shrink.

#### IV

“ At the very moment,” he says, “ at which I had signed at Kiow the formula of the sentence which condemned me to convict labour for the rest of my natural life, I had formed the determination of flying from such an accursed sojourn and lot ; and a vague hope of being again seen in the land of



the living and among free men had entered my mind."

In the summer of 1845 he made two unsuccessful attempts.

In the month of June he had noticed on the banks of the Irtiche a little skiff which was often left out at night and in which he thought that he might drift down stream to Tobolsk. Unfastening the boat one night, he had just stepped in and taken up the oars, when he heard the voice of the inspector on the bank, "and crept gently back to land."

In the following month, adventuring once more in the same tiny craft, he lost his way in a fog, and was lucky in being able to return undiscovered to his hut.

From this time, "I abandoned every thought of confiding myself to the uncertain waters of the Irtiche, but set myself not less persistently to ripen and consolidate the plans for my intended flight."

Having duly considered all possible routes, their several dangers, and the distances to be traversed, he finally resolved to seek his liberty by way of the north. His venture thus lay across the Oural Mountains, and over the wide, elevated and undulating zones of the steppes of Petchora and Archangel, to the borders of the White Sea itself. In that district of the uttermost North, at Archangel, there must surely be found, among the four or five thousand sail in port, one bark hailing from a friendly foreign shore, that would receive and shelter a Polish outcast fleeing from the pains of Siberia. It was to be tried, at all events.

And now once again a passport must be procured. This, among the articles indispensable to the voyage, figured as of first importance. Two of these docu-

ments Pietrowski succeeded in forging : a passport for short and a passport for long distances ; the second carrying " a capital seal with the arms of his imperial majesty " on a sheet of stamped paper abstracted from the counting-house.

Then the prisoner began to let his beard grow, and to collect the materials for a disguise, not forgetting a real Siberian wig of sheepskin such as the natives use against the searching cold. Little by little also he put together some 200 francs in paper currency.

Such preparations as he could make were complete in the first week of February, 1846, and on the 8th of the month he set out.

" I had on three shirts, the coloured one being, after the Russian fashion, pulled over the trousers. I had a waistcoat and trousers of thick cloth, and over all a little burnous (*armiak*) of sheepskin, well tallowed, which hung down to my knees, while great-boots with tops strongly tarred completed my costume. A girdle of red, white, and black worsted was tied round my waist, and over my wig I had one of those red velvet caps, edged with fur, which are worn on holidays by well-to-do Siberian peasants, and by commercial travellers. Besides all this, I was wrapped in a wide pelisse, of which the collar, turned up and tied by a red handkerchief round the neck, served less to keep out the cold than to hide my face. I carried a bag in my hand, and in it I had put a second pair of boots, a fourth shirt, a pair of blue trousers such as are worn in the country in summer, some bread and some dried fish. A large dagger was slipped into the sheath of my right boot ; and my money was under my waistcoat."

He was bound at the outset for Terbite, at the

foot of the Ourals. At Terbite there was held at this season one of those great fairs of Eastern Russia to which merchants and pleasure-seekers alike flocked in multitudes. Travellers and countless trains of all manner of merchandise overspread the roads; and in this concourse and this mass of traffic the fugitive might well hope to make, unperceived and unmolested, the first stage of the most perilous excursion ever undertaken from Ekaterinski-Zavod. Before him—leagues unnumbered—lay Archangel and the White Sea and the vision of a kindly ship: behind him the moral certitude of a death under the knout or a living death in the recesses of the fortress of Akatouia.

Under cover of the long February night, he stole away by a cross-road from his settlement, sped across the frozen Irtiche, was picked up by a sledge on the high road, and carried as far on his way as the little posting-town of Tara. At Tara he hired his own sledge, missed his way in a snowstorm, passed the night in a forest, discovered the road next morning, and journeyed thus from one little town or village to another, until, at a place called Soldatskaia, he was robbed at an inn of his principal passport, the memorandum on which he had traced his route to Archangel, and a great part of his paper money.

The loss of his chief passport left Pietrowski at the mercy of the first official who should ask for it; but retreat was now impossible, and he struck on foot into the high road to Terbite, and was presently in the swarm and bustle of the fair. He passed as a commercial traveller, a clerk who was waiting for his master.

Escaping from the fair, he took the road again,

and was now a workman in search of a job. "As a general rule I avoided the villages, but when it was necessary to pass one, I walked straight along the street, as if I belonged to the country, and did not require to ask my way. When I felt hungry, I pulled a piece of frozen bread from my bag and ate it as I walked along, or sat resting at the foot of a tree in the most remote part of a wood. . . . When night fell, I sought the heart of the forest, and there prepared a sleeping-place for myself."

One night, when he had been granted a bed in a cabin on the road, he was roused from sleep by some suspicious peasants who demanded a sight of his passport, and whom he had to drive by threats from his bed. After this experience, he says, it was but three or four times that he ventured "to crave hospitality for the night in some lonely hut; and that was only because I was exhausted by some fifteen or twenty days passed in the forest, and my strength was so far gone that I was hardly conscious of what I was, what I said, what I did. All the other nights I contented myself with digging an earth for sleeping in."

To the eastern slopes of the Ourals the spectres of cold and famine chased him, and on his wanderings by night in frozen forests he was never free from the fear of that sudden sleep of death which rode on every wind.

Early in March he reached Solikamsk, at the foot of the western declivity of the Ourals. From this point he toiled onwards by the *steppe* of Petchora towards Véliko-Oustiong; encountering, as before, illimitable wastes of snow, deep woods, and storms of wind and ice. In this locality, however, he had the happiness of observing that the few travellers

who passed there were in the habit of kindling a fire in the woods at night and keeping it ablaze till day-break. In the depths of one of these woods, at some distance from Solikamsk, he lost himself completely, was whirled to and fro in a hurricane of snow (literally compelled, as he says, to dance a pirouette in it), until at length it cast him to the ground, and he lay there praying for death. Stumbling forward again at dawn, numbed and starving, for his wallet was empty, he dropped at the foot of a tree, his face bathed in tears, and fainted. A trapper roused him from his swoon, gave him bread and dried fish and a mouthful of brandy, and put him in the way to an inn. These griefs he bore to Véliki-Oustiong, where he came in mid-April. Since quitting Ekaterinski-Zavod he had lived, through two months of snow and ice and tempest, the life of a man of the wilds.

At Véliki-Oustiong he took on a new existence. The habit of pilgrimage is strong among the Russians, and no scrupulous person omits a visit of devotion to the holy images of the convent of Solovetsk, in the White Sea. This was in Pietrowski's direct line of travel to Archangel, and he now therefore adopted the manners and attributes of a pilgrim, a *bohomolets*, or "worshipper of God." A man of simple, sincere piety, he seems to have hesitated a while before assuming this disguise; but among the crowd of professed pilgrims gathering at his new resting-place there was no more earnest soul than the convict in flight from Siberia. He himself tells us frankly :

"I was induced to adopt this disguise as much by the hope of uniting myself to some one of the pilgrim bands as by the universal respect paid to their char-

acter, and by the small chance that under their dress I should be exposed to any demands for my passport. While traversing the *steppes* of Petchora I had met several such companies on the way to Véliki-Oustiong, but while claiming fellowship with them I carefully avoided incorporating myself into their ranks. Too great an acquaintance might, I feared, betray me to them ; but I had the opportunities of furtively studying their devotional habits. At last, having reached Véliki-Oustiong, I thought myself sure enough of my part to be able without risk of detection to attempt a way of life in common with one of these bands of ‘ worshippers of God.’ We were in the town, and I found myself sufficiently embarrassed as I stood alone in the great marketplace, where, by good luck, a young man in a citizen’s dress stepped out of a shop, and came up to me as he said :

“ ‘ You are a *bohomolets* going to Solovetsk ? ’

“ ‘ Yes.’

“ ‘ Well, I am going there too ; have you got a lodging ? ’

“ ‘ Not yet ; I have only just arrived.’

“ ‘ Then come along with me. There are a good many of us, you know, but we shall find room for you. Our woman of the house is a good sort ; cooks for us, and bakes our bread. I’ve just been buying some flour and groats ’ ; and he pointed to the sack on his shoulder.”

Pietrowski went with the young man to his *izba*, where were crowded together some twenty other pilgrims of both sexes. Here, from day to day, he had to bear his part in all their religious exercises ; singing canticles through his nose, joining in matins and evensong, carrying lighted candles, and kissing

the hands of the *popes*. His religious feelings, he says, suffered somewhat "from this mummery."

The pilgrims were held at Véliki-Oustiong until the thawing of the Dvina. Pietrowski learned that while the boat-owners gave a free passage between Oustiong and Archangel to all *bohomolets* who could victual themselves for the voyage, they also paid a fee of fifteen roubles to any man willing to take an oar. Having spent just fifteen roubles on his journey, he promptly offered his services as a rower; and on the first day on which the Dvina was navigable he found himself installed in the clumsy barge for Archangel, with his hand on one of the "small fir trees" that did duty for oars. "We carried our baggage on board in the evening, and slept there all the first night, till, at daybreak, the *nosnik*—that is to say, the master of the vessel—cried, with a loud voice, 'Be seated, and pray to God!' Everyone then assembled on the deck, and after preserving for a moment a devotional attitude, worthy of a Mussulman, each man rose, crossed himself repeatedly, and made his *poklong*. When the prayers were finished, every living soul on board, from the master to the poorest of the *bohomolets*, threw a piece of copper money into the stream, to render the Dvina propitious to their course along its breast."

In a fortnight the ark of the pilgrims made haven in the quarters of the north. Pietrowski had got to Archangel. "I touched the shores of that bay of the White Sea, which in all my weary wanderings in the Ourals, had appeared to my mind's eye as the harbour of refuge! I now beheld those flags fluttering on vessels of deliverance, of which a vague and fairylike impression had often risen, like a

*fata morgana*, to cheer me on my Ostiak couch in the heart of the lonely forest."

But here at Archangel, in a day or two, hope fell from him! These sails, just mustering in the port at the opening of the season, were not the sails of deliverance. On every deck "walked a Russian soldier, a vigilant witness whose eye it was impossible to elude, for this watch was not taken off even at night; while sentries posted at short distances from one another formed an invincible barricade along the quays, and obliged all who came and all who went to give an account of themselves." Up and down the harbour he wandered, afraid, in his pilgrim's dress, to accost any seafaring man in French or German. Once he ventured a few words in French to some seamen who were fastening a ship to the pier; tried them next in German; "till, finally, they burst into a loud laugh, and I had to slip away as quietly as I might, for a crowd had already collected around me." On another day, hoping to approach a ship on the point of sailing, he stripped and bathed in the ice-cold water. For Archangel he had striven; the hope and prospect of Archangel had lured him through danger and privation; and from Archangel he had now to fly.

Separating himself gradually from the pilgrims whom he had accompanied, he struck into a bare, flat, and marshy country, wooded here and there, in a season in which night was distinguishable from day only by the greater stillness that reigned over the face of nature. The attempt at Archangel having failed him, no safe road was open but that which led to Onega.

"I do not say that I yet saw what I ought to do on reaching Onega; but after the mistake about



Archangel I was not inclined to make any great plans, or to think of the morrow. I therefore resolutely pursued my way, skirting the western edge of the promontory, and walking for several days along a path which was bounded, on the one side, by the sea, on the other by a low range of hillocks densely covered with wood.” From Onega, where he was tempted to no more experiments among the foreign ships at anchor in the port, Pietrowski pushed towards the south ; and at Vytiégra the chance opened of a passage by boat to St. Petersburg.

A peasant addressed him on the quays, asking where he was going.

“ I am a *bohomolets*,” replied the fugitive. “ I am returning from the monastery of Solovetsk and on my way to *adore the sacred bones* at Novgorod and at Kiow.”

“ ‘ Then,’ returned the peasant, ‘ I am your man. I will carry you to St. Petersburg. My boat is small, but I have only my horse to take with me, and you can help me to row . . . it is not heavy.’ ”

“ ‘ I am up to that sort of work, and I know that it isn’t light. What will you give me ? ’ ”

“ We wrangled a long time over the price, the sly villain having every mind to get the use of my arms, and not to pay for it. But at last we agreed that he should give me dressed victuals for the whole time of our voyage, and so pleased was he with his bargain that he took me straight to a pothouse to drink a glass with him.”

To go to St. Petersburg was to risk arrest in the very capital of the Emperor Nicholas, who had no excessive fondness for Polish refugees at large from Siberia ; but Pietrowski, arguing with himself that a great city was in some respects safer than a small

provincial town, had faith once again in the star of Providence, and took his place at the oar in the dirty little boat. Her master picked up along the shores an occasional frowsy passenger; and one of these, tipsy, Pietrowski fished out of the river. Presently came on board an old peasant woman, faring, somewhat dazedly, for the first time in her life, to St. Petersburg, where her daughter was employed at a laundry. This unsophisticated crone Pietrowski took forthwith into his care; and the old lady repaid him her best. For, when the boat one morning drew to shore opposite the Nevski Perspective, Pietrowski knew neither what to do with himself nor in what direction to adventure. "Bide here with me," said the dame. "I have sent word to my girl, and she will soon be down to fetch me. She'll tell you where to get a decent cheap lodging." This was pat to the anxious traveller's book. The laundress appeared; "kissed her mother affectionately, and took up her trunk, which she and I then carried between us on a stick across our shoulders. Thus we set off, preceded by the good 'old soul herself, who carried on her head the earthen jar which had contained her food." In this trim the Polish noble entered the city of all the Czars.

During some hours he lay close in the lodging found for him by the laundress. Then, since he was bound to take the road again as speedily as possible from the hostile capital of Nicholas, he ventured forth in quest of some propitious vessel. He had heard that one sailed on certain days from St. Petersburg to Havre; but where she lay, or when she put out, he knew not. Up and down the Neva he wandered, reading by stealth (for the peasant, the mere "Russian man," had no right to letters!)

the different red and yellow bills posted up on this steamer and on that.

“One would be ‘the vessel of His Majesty the Emperor,’ another ‘of His Highness the Prince Imperial,’ ‘of the Grand Duke Michael,’ ‘of Her Majesty the Empress, and the ladies of her Court,’ etc.”—not peculiarly in the line of the *protégé* of laundresses.

“Suddenly my eyes fell on an advertisement in large letters, which, stuck up near the mast of a steamboat, announced that the vessel was to sail for Riga on the following morning . . . !”

As he stood gazing at this ship, his heart tossing between hope and fear, a man like a pilot hailed him from the deck :

“ ‘Don’t happen to want to go to Riga, do you ? ’

“ ‘Yes, I do ; but how’s a poor chap like me to travel in the steamer ? That costs money.’

“ ‘It won’t cost much to a *moujik* of the likes of you.’

“ ‘Well, *how* much ? ’ ”

The man named a reasonable sum, and seeing that Pietrowski still hesitated, went on to ask :

“ ‘Well, what’s the matter with you now ? ’

“ ‘I am only just arrived here, and haven’t handed in my passport to the police.’

“ ‘Oh ! You’ll have a three days’ job of it with that, and we sail to-morrow morning.’

“ ‘Well, what am I to do ? ’

“ ‘Let’s look at your passport.’ ”

Pietrowski drew from his pocket the pass which, after the Russian plan, was carefully wrapped in a silk handkerchief ; but the pilot did not so much as glance at it.

“Come to-morrow morning, at seven sharp,” he said. “If you don’t find me here, wait for me.”

At seven the next morning Pietrowski was on board the steamer. Like a man in a dream, he heard the bell ring three times, watched the last of the passengers hurrying in, and saw the paddles turning round. He had escaped from St. Petersburg.

The passage to Riga was without incident; save that once, stupefied by sea-sickness, Pietrowski found himself in the first-class cabin, from which he was ignominiously driven as a *moujik* who might give its occupants the plague.

For his journey from Riga, across Courland and Lithuania, to the Prussian frontier, he adopted yet another calling—his fourth since the start from Ekaterinski-Zavod. He now proposed, he says, “to pass for a *stchetinnik*, this being the name given to the Russian peasants so often met with in those districts, as well as in Lithuania and in the Ukraine, who, going from one village to another, buy hogs’ bristles on behalf of the merchants of Riga. This trade suited me admirably, for under pretence of inquiring whether my article was to be had or not, it allowed me to knock at many doors, and to ask my way.”

It was summer, the month of July; pleasanter for sleeping beneath the stars than in the icy bosom of Siberia. The traveller in hogs’ bristles donned the suit of blue cotton which he had brought with him, renewed his linen and his boots, and exchanged his pelisse “with a tapster, for a great-coat and a little cap.”

His chief anxiety at present was to learn with what care the Russians watched their frontier. He had decided to pass into Prussia between Polonga and

Kurszany. A casual chat with a Russian soldier instructed him that the Prussians took very little trouble at the frontier ; and he then realised that it would be safer to attempt to cross the boundary line, not, as he had intended to do, by night, but in the daytime. The afternoon of the same day he slipped in among the corn. " Then, spying from the top of the rampart the moment during which both sentries turned their backs on each other, I leaped the first of the three ditches which marked the frontier. No noise was made ; I clambered through the brushwood, but as I reached the second ditch I was perceived. Shots were fired from guns on both sides, when, hardly conscious of what I was about, I slipped into the third ditch, then climbed up and leaped again. I lost sight of the soldiers, and was in a little wood. I was in Prussia ! "

Under a soft rain he lay for hours exhausted in the thicket. Then it was time to think of pastures new—and yet another disguise. He was in Prussia, and between this country and Russia there was a convention—a " cartel "—for the handing over of fugitives. So now (his fifth transformation in this extraordinary drama !) Pietrowski ceased to be a Russian *moujik*, shaved his beard, and changed himself into a French cotton-spinner returning to his own country.

Walking by day and sleeping by night at the sign of the stars, he passed Memel and Tilsit, and came on the 27th of July to Königsberg. No one molested him, no one was inquisitive about his transport. To the merchants whom he met he was just the French cotton-spinner going back to France.

In Königsberg harbour he saw a vessel that was to sail next day for Elbing. This would transport

him cheaply, and the footsore man had tramped it far enough. During a part of the evening he strolled to and fro in the town, reflecting on the history of all those painful journeyings since February 8th, anticipating with some tranquillity of mind the simple adventure of the morrow. Six months of nightmare wanderings, and a dawn of summer now gently breaking on them. He seated himself "on a heap of stones near a dismantled house," thinking by-and-by to seek the cornfields for the night. He had not reckoned with his weariness of body, and was soon fast asleep.

Out of slumber, towards midnight, Pietrowski was rudely shaken. A Prussian night watchman demanded to know who and what he was. Pietrowski's "infamous German" was unequal to a satisfying statement of his case; and at the hour at which he should have been pacing the deck of the ship for Elbing he was in a cell of a police station in Königsberg.

"The feeling which came over me when once more I found myself in prison was one of shame, far more than of sadness or despair. To have escaped from the *Katorga*, to have crossed the Oural Mountains, to have slept for months in the snow in Ostiak *earths*, to have endured so many sufferings and privations, to have leapt the Russian boundary line under the bullets of soldiers, and now to be arrested by a Prussian night constable!"

Arrested he was, however, and had to play again the dismal farce of pretending to be somebody else. To his examiners at the office of police Pietrowski protested that he was a Frenchman who had lost his passport, gave addresses both in France and in Russia, and demanded to be sent

back to his country. He was remanded to the Blue Tower, kept there for a month, and then again brought before the police. The addresses that he had given were, of course, absurd, and he now lay under very grave suspicions. Sick of deception, he asked for a private interview with two persons of high authority in the town. To them he confessed himself, and left in their hands his fate. "Miserable man!" they exclaimed, when his story was ended. "We must give you up to Russia. The convention is decisive. Why, oh! why did you come here?"

They sent him back to prison, having no choice in the matter.

One day "a gentleman, a merchant of Königsberg," presented himself in Pietrowski's cell. He begged the prisoner to accept his bail. "Astonished as well as touched at this unexpected offer, I asked for an explanation of it, and then learnt that the report of the arrest of a Pole who had escaped from Siberia had spread through the town, and caused a general and lively emotion." Königsberg, in a word, had bestirred itself for the fugitive, who was forthwith set free on bail.

In a week he was again invited to attend at the police office. Orders had come from Berlin, said the magistrates, that he must be given up to Russia. Pietrowski bowed to the magistrates. The magistrates, smiling, announced that they had found a way for him. They would give him time to fly at his own peril. "I was profoundly touched," he says, "by their generous proceedings, and promised to do my utmost to save them any further trouble."

On the following morning, the 9th of September,

he was on his way to Dantzic. Within one day of a fortnight he was back again in Paris. It was the 22nd of September, 1846. He had been four years in peril of a life of slavery, and eight months in close and curious touch with death in the wilds or by torment. He was a familiar figure in Paris while Europe was devouring the book of his adventures.

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## IV

### AN IRISH MIDDY IN THE WARS OF NAPOLEON

#### THE THREE FLIGHTS OF DONAT O'BRIEN

*"A company of warm young men."*—DRYDEN.

*"Fieldes have eies and woods have eares."*—HEYWOOD.

*"Slog on! Slog on!"*—CAPTAIN SCOTT to his sledge party.



## AN IRISH MIDDY IN THE WARS OF NAPOLEON

### I

THE total wreck on the Saintes rocks (February 8th, 1804) of the luckless *Hussar* frigate serves as prelude to the three epical adventures of Donat Henchy O'Brien. These adventures are a summary of the best and worst fortunes of a fugitive on foreign soil in time of war. The Hibernian touch and humour in them are exquisite, and perhaps unequalled. This broth of an Irish midday was a County Clare boy, and through all his flights we may hear the pulse of youth singing its inimitable tune. A character in one of R. L. Stevenson's most fantastic tales speaks of looking forward to the perils of escape (from some Mormon terror, I think) with a taste of the joy of battle; and in like vein does Donat O'Brien three times take fate and fortune by the beard.

If any sailor or soldier "hath his bellyful" of adventure it is young Donat; for no sooner does he fall captive than he is again on the break; and the "throbbing terror of pursuit," though it find him with lacerated feet, a drenched back, and an empty stomach, yet at no crisis, in no situation, exhibits him unequal to adversity. He wears the rose of youth; he wears it as finely as Napoleon had done, whose prisoner he is through these exploits.

Sometimes it is the getting out of prison that costs the most. Louis Napoleon was moderately safe when he had crossed the drawbridge of Ham. Mary Queen of Scots, with her palfrey, and Lord Seaton for escort, on the farther side of the lake, had but a gallop of it to Niddry. Benvenuto Cellini had faced the worst in clambering out of St. Angelo. Isaac Arnould had jumped his perils in eluding the garrison of Esslingen. Quiqu eran de Beaujeu, Knight of Malta and one of the first seamen of his time, had little to fear when his nephew had received him into the skiff at the base of the Seven Towers of Constantinople. The extremest risks of Lavalette were over at the moment that he walked out of the Conciergerie in the black silk skirt and bonnet of his wife (who had supped with him there the night before he was to die), and stepped into her sedan at the prison door.

But the prisoner of war in a foreign country, after digging through or climbing over his prison, or evading his conductors on the march, had then most commonly to make his way alone, or with companions as ignorant as himself, for hundreds of miles through a hostile people, to a port or frontier of which he rarely knew the whereabouts, with or without compass, with or without provisions or arms, and, at best, with none but a stranger's habit of the language. O'Brien, evading at his third attempt a fortress securer and under closer guard than the Bastille, addresses himself at once, with a wet wind of evening in his nostrils, to a new trial of affairs ; not faintly, but whorooing in his Irish way at the exhilarating prospect.

## II

After a vain effort at escape in a fishing-boat with twenty-five men under his command, O'Brien surrendered as prisoner of war to the French Admiral at Brest. On the 18th of February he and his sailors began their march into the interior. On the 28th of March, completing in thirty-nine days a tramp of 700 miles, they arrived at Givet, "the Gateway of France," a town dominated by the fortress of Charlemont. In July, O'Brien was transferred to Verdun, a famous place of confinement for English naval and military officers during the long Napoleonic wars.<sup>1</sup>

To persons of means Verdun offered the distractions of horse-racing and *rouge et noir* (with others of a shyer sort); but O'Brien expended his abundant leisure on the study of French, Italian, and fencing. From July, 1804, until August, 1807, he continued quietly in lodgings at Verdun, observing his parole, and rarely quitting the town. Then his spirits dulled, and he yearned for freedom. He tells us<sup>2</sup> that he lay during some days in a state bordering on stupefaction, from which he was roused only by the bold counsels of two fellow-prisoners, midshipmen Ashworth and Tuthill; they also meditating flight. But all the boys were nice on the point of honour, and would not go behind their parole. They managed easily to forfeit it by missing the *appel*, or roll-call,

<sup>1</sup> Other war prisons of note were at Amiens, Auxonne, Dunkirk, Saumur, Saarlouis, Tours, and Tangiers; and for deserters and refractory subjects the dreaded dungeon of Bitche.

<sup>2</sup> "My Adventures During the Late War: A Narrative of Shipwreck, Captivity, Escapes from French Prisons, and Sea Service in 1804-14." Donat Henchy O'Brien, Capt. R.N. Edited by Charles Oman.

and two or three times staying late out of town<sup>1</sup>; and having lost their "permissions" they could dispense with scruple. As mere lodgers in the town they had no difficulty in providing themselves with files, saws, and gimlets; and each of the trio had procured his few fathoms of rope for the scaling of the ramparts. On the eve of the essay Lieutenant Essel of the Navy was admitted to the plot. They could divide among them a little fortune in gold (Essel's contribution was £50), and in the hour of departure O'Brien may have blessed the evenings he had given to the acquisition of French.

On the night of the 29th of August (they had failed on the 28th) the four slipped over and down the ramparts, extricated themselves from the moat, and set their faces N.W. Somewhere about Étaples they thought "to procure a boat." It was nothing to them that they were at Verdun in Lorraine, and that Étaples (will any reader glance at the map?) lay on the coast of Picardy.

The first mishap was O'Brien's. In leaping a dike, to avoid a village directly in their track, he twisted his right knee in the joint, and on the marches of four or five succeeding nights was a burden in the arms of his friends. At the end of a week, O'Brien growing sound again, Essel fell sick; and the day came when on any terms he must be sheltered for a while. They tried an inn where peasants were dancing; scrambled on to a farmhouse at the banks of the Oise, Essel lagging behind; found no admittance there; and pursued their journey till, in a hamlet two leagues from St. Quentin, they got leave from an elderly dame to deposit their com-

<sup>1</sup> The gates were shut at 9 p.m., and every officer below the rank of lieutenant had to sign his name twice a day.

panion in her hay-loft. Taking them for conscripts (she had a brother in the Army), the old lady tended the refugees for twenty-four hours, and repaired the garments that had suffered by branch and brake. A night or so later they were the guests of a sympathetic publican, who said that he too had once quitted the ranks as a conscript and remembered what it was to lie concealed by day. Forward they went again the next evening, through mud and bog and quagmire ; for the fugitive must keep neither decent company nor the decent highway. Essel continued in the poorest case, and now O'Brien was troubled with swollen feet ; but friends arose on the one hand or the other. After the dame and the publican it was a good-natured baker, over whose kindling hearth they warmed themselves, and who even found beds for them to sleep in. The third week of September brought a hint of grey frosts, but the hazel was yielding nuts and there were orchards to make free with. A farmer led them into his kitchen where a feast of harvest-home was toward, telling the young officers that he well knew they were soldiers of France going to fight under the eagles of the Emperor. Such bounties were enjoyed on somewhat anxious terms !

The wanderers were now, as they judged, not above seven leagues or so from Étaples, and this distance they resolved to cover in one night. At midnight they passed the strong town of Hesdin, and at dayspring of the 17th were about three leagues short of their goal. Near the bourg or municipal town of Nieuville they came to an inn kept by a shepherd ; and here they were but just accommodated with a snug private chamber when they learned that in an adjoining room was a gen-

darme "in the disguise of a peasant." His presence sharpened the wits of our friend, and on the entry of the taverner-shepherd they admitted him to their secret, offering a round sum for conveyance across the Channel. Essel had lost on the way his gold coin to the amount of £45, but O'Brien and the others could still make a purse between them. The host left the house on this mission. Returning, he informed his visitors with excess of caution that not a boat was to be had; that, moreover, they would do well to make themselves scarce, since he was obliged to account to the mayor for every stranger who spent a night beneath his roof. Indeed, no sooner had they paid for their refreshment than the rovers were turned forth upon the night, their funds diminished, their prospects deeper in eclipse.

Whiles their course was in debate, they were overtaken by the daughter of the inn, who amiably directed them to a house where, she said, they would find a serviceable person. And, to be sure, at the place indicated was an obliging individual with a boat; for it was necessary or advisable to cross the Canche river. The obliging individual put them over, and showed from the bank a hut at which other aid might be entreated. But the wayfarers had taken toll enough of providence that evening. For the hut proved a most uncivil one. A man and a woman were within, who harboured the officers for no longer than the time it took to plead their wants and miserable situation. As well might they, exclaims O'Brien, have bespoken two Egyptian mummies. Rain fell as though the heavens and earth would meet: all was one to the churl and his vixen; not the shelter of cow-house



or pigsty had they for four such dubious foreign characters, dry or soaked.

On they fared, stumbling at last into an open barn, with a noble provision of hay. Bedded and burrowed in this they lay until the following forenoon, Friday, September 18th. And now, within the very skirts of Étapes, the touchstone of the enterprise drew near. Thus far in the main befriended, it was now comprised in touch and go. Spying from their barn, the adventurers perceived by all the tokens of the road that they had unluckily fallen on a market-day. The whole district was in motion towards the ferry-boat. There was nothing for it but to mingle and trudge with the crowd.

“ We kept advancing towards the sand-hills with all the appearance of carelessness and confidence, but with a quick, and, as far as we could assume appearances, a bold and firm step; and we arrived at last at a poor, sorry village, through which we had to pass. We had actually got to the very last house, when our poor friend Ashworth felt extremely exhausted, and expressed that his parching thirst obliged him to ask for a draught of water. On all such occasions every one of the party was consulted, and the majority of votes constituted the ultimatum, or decision; and whether a long train of success, or a long succession of narrow escapes, had made us vainly confident, I cannot say, but not one of us saw the slightest danger in Ashworth's entering this house. It was impossible to suppose that so wretched a village could contain either troops or gendarmes; and as we had passed through the place without attracting any notice whatever, we did not imagine that there could be any danger in entering the last house at its extremity. The glorious sea,

with all its inspirations, was before us, and we laughed at what we had undergone; for our hearts were light, and our minds full of the glad prospects of attaining to all our wishes.”<sup>1</sup>

In Ashworth’s tumbler of water the expedition was drowned.

His friends loitered in the neighbourhood of the house until anxiety grew into alarm, and Tuthill went back to hail and hurry him. What were the sensations of O’Brien and Essel when, a few moments later, they beheld Ashworth and Tuthill advancing towards them—concern in their faces—between two dingy uniforms! This had the air of downfall, for the uniforms proclaimed that inquisitorial customer, the Excise. Ashworth and the lieutenant, in short, were the prisoners of two *douaniers*, or customs men—wildfowl whom our own birds of passage had not until now encountered.

Some pretext must be advanced on the instant; for the polite officials were politely eager to know what fortune had wafted *ces messieurs* to Étapes. That explained, their welcome would, of course, be the warmer. But for a conjuncture of this sort O’Brien and his friends, who had many times rehearsed the scene, were not unprepared. They were Captain Cox and company (mate, supercargo, and a passenger) of the ship *Favourite*, of New York, cast away near Marseilles, all hands perished save themselves, who were awaiting transport to their country. O’Brien had the fable pat, and delivered it with a most engaging frankness. The *douaniers* shed their pity on the survivors of the *Favourite*—and returned to business. The gentlemen had given themselves the trouble of procuring passports? Passports!

<sup>1</sup> “My Adventures,” etc., p. 93.

The gentlemen had thought them of no consequence at all ; they were natives of a great and free country in which every citizen came and went as it pleased him. " Ah ! . . . in America . . . yes . . . certainly . . . but in France." Still, of what consequence ? for the office of the mayor was but just round the corner, if one might say so ;—and what a pleasure to his worship to furnish passports to the survivors of the *Favourite* ! For the survivors of the *Favourite* the look-out was growing remarkably blue. They had now, in the company of the *douaniers*, entered Étaples itself—a quicksand of which there seemed no getting to windward—and what to do with the things in their pockets they did not know. Their captors had taken note of the frail estate of Essel, and suggested that the gentleman might be little the worse for a pint of wine. For themselves ? Well, yes ; they were *douaniers*, as everybody knew ; they were officers of the Emperor ; but it would be a happiness to drink to the safe return to America of *ces messieurs* of that unfortunate *Favourite*. Escape from the tavern—a vague hope of O'Brien's—was impossible ; and they were marched as friends to the captain of the customs men, and the captain at once sent a message to the mayor. The mayor had fetched with him, says O'Brien in italics, "*an American gentleman*," who was unkind enough to suspect the nationality of his compatriots. A raking cross-examination brought their pretensions to the dust. They were searched, and the contents of their pockets shattered the fiction of New York. At this they gave in, and revealed themselves. The court melted in sympathy, but had its duty to perform. The prisoners must be sent to Boulogne. At the prison of Boulogne they were received by a gaoler

whom in their distress they had forgotten to bribe, and who provided them for bed "two small sheaves of straw," and for supper a bucket of water.

## III

This gaoler was an odd fish. Condemned some years earlier to perpetual imprisonment in chains, he was still in a manner working out his sentence, for he lived closely in the prison, and wore small bracelets and anklets of silver. On a promise of liberal payment he set food before his wayworn lodgers.

They were, of course, to be returned to Verdun, and took the road on the morning of the 22nd. General Wirion had despatched expresses to all stages on the route, with instructions that the prisoners be not leniently treated; and the second day their guards clapped on them both fetters and handcuffs. The countryfolk observing them in this wretched travesty, accounted for it by the legend that they were British spies, who would be shot at their journey's end. A tender-hearted landlady at Landrecies, where they stayed for a meal, shed tears over their manacles, and fed the youths with her own hands.

At all halting-places Wirion's mandate procured for them the very sorriest accommodation that could be had. Thus, at Landrecies they shared a dungeon with a mad murderer who had cut both his parents in pieces; at Hirson they were thrust into a subterranean cell—and here, by the way, the gaolers made a prize of their little store of files, gimlets, the stock of a double-barrelled pistol, and so forth. How these articles had escaped the inquisition of Boulogne O'Brien omits to inform us.

At daybreak on October 2nd, the highroad having fallen into a state of slough, they were chained in a cart; and thus by sad and heavy stages they came in the latter end of the month to Verdun.

O'Brien was placed in a cell with another prisoner suspected of spying; and in this companionship his own situation seemed more than ever dangerous. Evidently he was regarded as the chief of the conspiracy: might he not also be selected as its chief victim—and confronted with the muskets of a firing-party? He was examined separately, and in rigorous fashion. The court tried to fasten on him the charge of a design against the life of the Emperor, and sifted him minutely respecting the pistol-stock. Their case collapsed, but of one offence the prisoner stood plainly convicted. He had broken loose from Verdun, and must make ready for a sojourn at Bitche.

“In a week we were ordered to prepare ourselves for a march to the fortress of Bitche, in Lorraine, a wretched place, well known to many of our unhappy countrymen; a place in the dreadful caverns of which many a valuable British subject had terminated his existence in all the agony that illness, despondency, and ill-usage could create. This was my transition from the wretched fate of being shot. And here, in some wretched *souterrain*, we were to remain during the war; nay, they even asserted that it was Bonaparte's own decree.”<sup>1</sup>

But under this distressful stroke his mind begins forthwith to probe the future. He already meditates another dash. In what quarter can he raise

<sup>1</sup> “My Adventures,” etc., p. 114.

the wind? A bountiful fellow-prisoner, the Rev. C. Launcelot Lee,<sup>1</sup> Fellow of New College, Oxford, tenders his purse. Thus equipped, O'Brien bates no jot of heart or hope.

In a caravan under a strong escort of gendarmerie O'Brien and his comrades, to whom were joined eight other culprits, began their transit to that dismal fastness in the Vosges. By Mars-la-Tour, Metz, Sarrelouis, and Sarreguemines they jolted onwards. At Sarreguemines the cavalcade was but a few leagues from Bitche; and on setting out thence the guards so far slackened in vigilance as to ease the prisoners of their shackles. If this were not the finger of a smiling fate, what was it! O'Brien whispered his companions; and when the caravan had drawn out of the town, he, with Ashworth, Tuthill, and young Baker of the merchant service, got leave to stretch their legs beside it. Poor Essel, still ailing, kept his place in the waggon.

"We had not got more than two or three miles," says O'Brien, "when I discovered a wood at about one hundred and fifty yards from the road: our guards were about fifty yards behind us, and on horseback. In so unequal a chase, a chase between man and horse, we might be overtaken in our run to the wood; but if we could once reach that point, we were safe, for, although there were no leaves on the trees, we were certain that our mounted guards could not pursue us without a great deal of difficulty, owing to the branches and underwood; and, should

<sup>1</sup> There seem to have been several English clergymen in bond at Verdun. One of them, the Rev. John Hopkinson, Rector of Alwalton, near Peterborough, left a brief, interesting narrative, which Dr. T. J. Walker reproduces in his volume, "The Dépôt for Prisoners of War at Norman Cross."

they dismount, accoutred as they were, and with their heavy boots, we knew that we could outrun them with the greatest ease."

In a flash they were away. The guards might have sat in their saddles and laughed; the freak must have looked so childish. But an escape of the hare-brained Britishers would land the guards themselves within the danger of the galleys; and instead of laughing, they gave tongue and chase. In a ploughed field Baker came to earth, a facile prey. Some minutes later O'Brien, effaced behind a tree, watched the guards plunging to and fro in the wood, and his friends dodging their pistol shots. From him the pursuit was withdrawn; and stealing through the wood he took to his heels across an extensive plain, hearing on every side as he ran the cries of the peasants who had sprung "like wolves to the hunt." Yet another space, and silence fell around him; and he realised that, if for the moment free, he was utterly alone.

Plain and stubble and fallow lands lay all about him, and to the south the unfordable Sarre. In a tiny vale between two brooks he found a miniature islet; and in this muddy paradise, weary and famished, but with a virtuous and delicious sense of liberty, he slept a part of Sunday—the tocsin or alarm-bell of the parish flinging an unwonted lullaby. With the descent of night he rose up for the march.<sup>1</sup> His immediate course was as vague as the unilluminated sky above him. Seven hundred miles and more away lay the city of Salzburg, in Austria; and this was the nearest seat of refuge for a tourist who had neither guide, nor companion, nor compass, nor

<sup>1</sup> Ashworth and Tuthill had not a much longer run of it than Baker. We shall meet them again.

food, nor conveyance ; and on whose head was set the customary price of two pounds one and eight pence sterling. Towards Salzburg at dusk on Sunday he adventured. His first sally, after a rest in a copse among rats and moles, brought him to a hut where an elderly man taxed him at a venture with his escape. He left a gold piece as an apology, and stepped it again, floundering through gully and morass, and lighting on a kitchen garden, where he ate greedily of cabbages and turnips. He felt his old trouble of blistered feet, and was weak and faint. He continued his journey, as he thought, towards the Rhine. A gendarme on horseback shouted the "*Qui vive ?*" and O'Brien cowered in a gravel-pit. At half-past two on an icy morning he saw a glimmer of light in a hovel on the edge of a wood, and drawing near, he espied through the key-hole a woman spinning at her fire. He felt himself looking into heaven. A surly man answered his clatter on the door, and let him in. Would they give him a drink ? There was a pail of water on the floor, and the man silently ladled out a draught. At this uncommon hour a tailor arrived on a day's work for the family, who hinted at the escape from Bitche—the gossip now of the whole countryside—and asked O'Brien if he had a passport. O'Brien demanded to know what sort of tattling rascal this was—and betook himself as quickly as possible into the storm without.

November was taxing him to the utmost. He was never dry ; he was feeding on roots plucked from the fields ; he was shelterless. His indomitable heart of youth sustained him.

There are visions of him in a great cave under a rock, the habitat of wild hogs : in another cave



near the summit of a precipice, which he scales only to roll down it again in a nightmare dream, crying aloud on his former comrades to rise and fly with him : crossing a chain of barren mountains, stopping to wring the water out of his coat, sleeping and being awakened by the chattering of a jay : venturing by times into a cottage to beg a bite or sup, or, with what nonchalance he might—to seek directions towards his goal : running almost through a night (feet, notwithstanding, so sore and swollen, that he takes off boots and runs in the dark in his stockings) : and being brought to a sudden stand by the walls of a town unknown. This town, Hague-nau, was girdled by a river ; and on an evening of bitter frost O'Brien stripped to the skin and swam it. In the small hours of next morning he fell in company with a butcher going somewhere to buy cattle, who told him he was three leagues from Strasbourg. The butcher leaving him, he sank awhile in a field for the ease of those tortured feet ; then dragged his boots over them (skin peeling off as he did so), and stood in freezing water to cool them. Through a spell of fog he groped his way to the borders of a village, and into a house where two kindly German girls were spinning flax. They gave him milk, and instantly wanted to send for their mayor, who spoke French really quite well, and ——— But O'Brien was not for the society of any French-speaking mayor ; he would on no account disturb his worship, and beat a civil and very brisk retreat.

We have glimpsed him and his lost companions at their surreptitious snatches of fruit and nuts. He says now : “ I had an opportunity this day of getting an excellent supply of turnips. This part of

the country abounds in them ;<sup>1</sup> they are the principal food of their cattle ; and the peasantry were busily employed in piling them in heaps, and covering them with earth, as the winter store of provender. In one respect, at least, I might have thought myself reduced very much to the condition of Nebuchadnezzar, for both my food and shelter resembled those of four-footed animals."

Nebuchadnezzar seems at any rate to have grazed unmolested. O'Brien ate his turnips in trepidation, with his loins girded, and an eye watchful of every point of the compass. Within span or thereabouts of the Rhine he passed one of his strangest nights : rain searching him to the marrow ; limping in utter darkness through a region of bogs ; overtaken by sleep against a willow on the edge of a dyke. Sleeping always in fear of surprise, the rustle of a hare among twigs would arouse him ; and he awoke on a tread of footsteps. A peasant was walking briskly past him, and O'Brien jumped up and followed. The pair dropped at once into companionable chat, and O'Brien, with his fluent knack of improvisation, straightway became a Swiss conscript who had deserted from the army because they would not grant him leave for home on the death of his parents. He was sick of the French army, and France might be damned. Confidence for confidence. O'Brien's casual fellow-traveller was a Russian by birth, who in his turn had given Napoleon the slip. He conducted O'Brien to within a little of the gates of Strasbourg, and pointed him a safe place on the banks of the Rhine.

<sup>1</sup> O'Brien's observations are everywhere to the point. He had a keen eye, an unfailing memory, and—had their years agreed—would have been a very competent collaborator of Arthur Young in the famous "Travels in France."

This happy morn was a Sunday, the eighth day of his nomad's existence since taking leave of the caravan. The Russian had bade him look for some fishermen's huts, and while prowling on the bank he caught sight of and beckoned to a boat, the two occupants of which turned out to be armed officials. In this new predicament O'Brien's nimble Irish tongue again prevailed (he was now from Wirtemberg, had been an ensign in the service of the English King, and so forth), and the officers told him where to bide till he could get across the Rhine. They wished him well, but dared not take him over. On Monday his chance came. At Kehl bridge a great herd of oxen was being driven to the German side of the river. Quick as thought, O'Brien slipped in among the beasts. French and German sentries were posted at intervals along the bridge, but every man stood muffled in his box ; and in fifteen minutes the outlaw had put the splendid breadth of the Rhine betwixt himself and the territory of France.

On the soil he now trod, he aimed at passing for a Frenchman. Under what laws and conventions the crossing of the Rhine had brought him, he knew not ; but, without the shield of a passport, there was need of all circumspection. He slept in peace between two feather-beds of an inn on the road to Friburg, doctored his feet with candle-grease, and felt himself a prince in descending to order breakfast. It seemed to him that never in his life before had he commanded a meal ; and the coffee at this place, the milk-soup flavoured with pepper at another, and even the cheese and thin wine at a third were so many banquets on Olympus. One well-wisher, perspicacious enough to detect in the Irishman a French cloth merchant on a round of visits to his

customers, carried him a fair piece on the road in his little wicker carriage. Taking a circuitous course around Friburg (the gate being kept by a giant of a grenadier), O'Brien set his face for Constance, some nineteen leagues to compass.

Crossing the lake by ferry-boat to Meersburg he was all but upset in a squall. At the dawn of another Sunday, November 29th, he was in his course for Lindau. His heart was high, the bruised feet were healing, and all day he walked through fairy villages on the banks of the lake. Towards five Lindau rose up at a distance of a few miles. Till seven he dallied in a wayside shanty; and a short while afterwards had passed the gate and sentinel unchallenged. "I was safe," he cries, "my sufferings were rewarded, and a glorious triumph filled my imagination even to ecstasy. Lameness was forgotten; and I was, if I may use the term, tripping along full of visions of the little I should have to undergo, of the little time that would elapse ere I should be again upon England's element, under her glorious flag, and in the exercise of all my duties of a naval officer."

Some paces beyond the gate, a meddlesome old gentleman detained him with an inquiry for his passport. Ready as ever—though his heart began to give—O'Brien responded that he had lost all his papers and most of his money whilst crossing the lake the previous evening. His fancy at work in a crack, he added that he was due at Innsprück, where he had friends, and was minded to follow his nose without farther hindrance. Were his papers the concern of every passer-by? Up came the guard of the gate. Going to Innsprück? Innsprück was perhaps at a greater distance than the French gentleman imagined; and, as it was growing rather

late, he might find it inconvenient to go on without his papers : no knowing what questions might be asked. For the matter of papers, answered O'Brien, he would put his luck to the test ; and was in the act of making a valiant exit when he found himself surrounded by soldiers. The trap was well laid, and he was conducted to the quarters of the commandant of Lindau.

The commandant, attired for a visit to the opera, came grumbling on the scene. Having no French, he must summon his secretary ; and the examination proceeded in form. O'Brien, requested to account for himself, boggled at nothing, and flew his fences with his wonted verve. His name was Louis Gallique. His father, now unhappily no more, had been a surgeon in Rouen, where the deponent had a brother of the same honourable profession, and two sisters. Through his brother's interest he had got his discharge from the army. He was going to stay with friends at Innsprück, and the goal of his journey was Vienna, where it was as good as certain that he would enter as clerk in a counting-house. Who were his German friends at Innsprück ? He gave them the promptest French baptism : they were all of French extraction. And his pocket-book and papers ? " In crossing a branch of the lake, a puff of wind was near oversetting the boat ; my pocket-book must have dropped out as I was leaning over." This ingenuous history was interpreted by his secretary to the commandant, who possibly found it a trifle too well-pieced, or possibly was annoyed at the thought of his empty box at the opera. He dismissed O'Brien as a dubious character to the guard-house. From this pound he was shifted to the common gaol ; and his second flight comes

to an end. He was to be returned to France as an escaped prisoner of war. Deposited in a cell at the gaol, his dreams were of another break for liberty.

None the less, his immediate prospect was of the gloomiest. To Bitche they would indubitably pack him ; Bitche, where very rude consideration might be looked for ; Bitche, out of whose dungeons none had ever freed himself ; Bitche, on whose battlements sat fate.

For the present, his detainers at Lindau, deeming nudity a more effectual restraint than irons, stripped their prisoner to the skin, and left the stout young heart to its reflections.

Before the light on the thirteenth day the gaoler entered with breakfast and the clothes ; and while O'Brien was still intent upon his food two soldiers intruded on him ; " the foremost holding in his hands an immense iron chain with shackles or fetters, and a large padlock." Thus decorated, in despite of protest, he was brought forth like a malefactor to his doom ; beholding, as he issued, " an immense concourse of people assembled, to catch a sight of the unfortunate prisoner whom the commandant had thought proper thus twice or triply to secure. The wondering crowd came to view what they thought a monster ; for such reports had been spread of my miraculous escapes, and such exaggerated and fabulous accounts had been given of what I had achieved that the ignorant populace believed I was some demon, or at least a magician in disguise." He adds that the gaoler's wife shed tears over him as if she were losing a son.

North towards Strasbourg he was driven. For the second time he crossed the Kehl bridge, where, for all his finery of bilboes, the sentries insisted on

searching him. It pleased him to remind them that they had once been less diligent on his account. In the military gaol of Strasbourg he learned that he should travel next day to Bitche in the company of eleven Corsican soldiers, under sentence of death for desertion. Into this sad fellowship he duly entered, and was chained and handcuffed to the eleventh man. These poor Corsicans, whom each revolution of the waggon-wheels brought nearer to the grave, seemed to feel their own appalling plight less sorely than O'Brien's; for the escort, apprised of his skill and daring in evasion, had nearly strangled him with the chain and screwed on the handcuffs until his wrists were torn. Within four days of Christmas the waggon drew up beneath the towers of Bitche.

## IV

The hour of O'Brien's reception in the fortress chanced to be that at which its inmates, his afflicted countrymen, were fetched for a brief airing from their subterranean cells. There stood the twelve new-comers in a row, young Donat and the doomed Corsicans, their chains still garnishing them. No one recognised the Irishman. "He must have been the head of some banditti!" he heard one of his former comrades say. "He looks like it," observed another. "Perhaps," hazarded a third, "he is the captain of the soldiers he is chained to." "Heavens alive!" a fourth ejaculated, "it is O'Brien!"

In a breath Ashworth and Tuthill were to the fore, followed by Baker of the merchant service. Where, asked O'Brien eagerly, was Essel? Alas! the ill-starred lieutenant had taken his last earthly flight. In a notable attempt to scale the walls of

Bitche—who had ever done it!—Essel had fallen, and dashed himself in pieces.

The colloquy was brief, being flat against the rules. O'Brien's new turnkeys raked him with no very amiable eye. Through him it was—or so they averred—that certain gendarmes of the escort from Verdun had gone to the galleys; and he was speedily conducted to a black, filthy, and miasmatic keep fifty feet below the courtyard, where, nature supporting him, he would abide for thirty-one days. In this hold he found messmates who were strangers to him: Worth, a midshipman, and Brine, a captain of the merchant service. “They were on a door, which they had managed to unhinge, and which lay as a platform to keep them out of the excrement and wet, that were more than ankle deep: they had a little straw and a blanket.” These two, with three others at present in the surgeon's hands, had been concerned in the fatal venture of Essel.

The Corsicans were seen no more of O'Brien, to whom a side-wind conveyed it that the eleven had been shot. For himself, he lay in ill case enough. It would scarcely be for nothing that he had twice derided the custody of Napoleon. Some form of trial awaited him, the upshot of which was conjectural: the galleys, a blindfold interview with the marksmen of Bitche, or the guillotine itself. Nay, one might come to death by mere neglect in the putridity of the dungeon; for not once, Worth and Brine protested to him, had they tasted air since the hour they were carried below.

So be it! For a third time he must be fortune's suppliant. But what way of wooing her in Bitche?

Even as he stood on the threshold O'Brien had swiftly remarked that mighty masonry: a sight to



bring frosts of despair upon the heart. On the second night, over a flask of smuggled brandy and illumined by an end of smuggled candle, his new brethren enlarged somewhat on their terrible abode. There was not in France a stronger fortification. Ramparts, redoubts, entrenchments, and what not of military engineering: while, within and without, no prisoner could surmise the strength and quality of the guard. Of the three ramparts on one side of the fortress, the first had an altitude of near 100 feet, the second of 40 to 50 feet, and the third of 25 to 30 feet. Altogether, before achieving the *fosse* or moat (with its cordon of sentries), the prisoners, with what feeble rope they might procure, must account for about 180 feet of wall; and, should it come to a sudden and sheer drop, the easiest would possibly be of 30 feet. No hope was crazier or more forlorn—and the earth of the prison grave fresh above the broken body of Essel!

O'Brien and the pair with him were ardent to essay this unessayable.

They somehow found themselves in chisels and hammers, which must be secreted about their persons by day. Their expedient was the herculean one of hewing a passage through the walls. "We hung an old coat up against that part of the rock that we intended to begin upon. Rope was necessary to descend the ramparts after we had got out of the dungeon; we accordingly, through some friends, who had obtained permission to come and see us, contrived to purchase some stout linen for shirts (which we really much wanted), and from the shoemakers among the prisoners we got now and then a ball of twine. We procured needles, bees'-wax, etc., by degrees, and made a rope of four or five

fathoms for each, which we *marled* with the remainder of the twine, and passed tight round our bodies underneath the shirt."

But the design of a passage through the walls was dropped as quite unprofitable.

Late in January they were transferred to another black-hole, where Ashworth and Tuthill and half a hundred other English were entombed. O'Brien's thought worked like a shuttle on some more feasible mode of deliverance; and, as prisoners of an older day had done,<sup>1</sup> he wore continually around his waist his portion of the scaling rope. In the first days of July the favour of the commandant franked him to a higher and more wholesome chamber of the fortress, where Brine, Ashworth, and Tuthill were of the company. In mid-month, by the whisper of a young seaman, he got wind of an imminent plot of escape. The exit was to be from the cave he had newly quitted, and now what stratagem would serve for re-descending? That nimble Irish fancy was not long about it. He got the ear of one Buché, the gendarme of the night, and him he cajoled with a legend of a birthday supper in the *souterrain* (so likely a celebration in Bitche!), at which he wanted to be present. Buché was not proof against the blarney; and Ashworth, Tuthill, and Brine were allowed to descend with O'Brien. Behind the rattle of a concert and merrymaking, surely the most singular ever improvised, went the noise of the chisels and saws of the prison-breakers. They were forcing a door, they were mining a path beneath another door. The aim of the workers was a deep-seated passage, known to exist, which led up out of the fortress. "This was a very intricate communi-

<sup>1</sup> Notably De Beaujeu.

cation, and we had to feel our way to those slight doors, as it was dangerous to have candle-light. . . . Our over-eagerness in forcing the third door shot the bolt back, which caused a noise that was overheard by the sentinels outside."

The guard was aroused—and the plot lay bare.

## V

O'Brien had an incredible shave of it. He sprang into the bed of a tipsy American ; at the summary roll-call Brine (who must in any case have fallen prisoner) was mistaken for him ; and he succeeded in mounting to his own quarters. The rest made a forced march to Metz, were there tried for "conspiracy," and sentenced to various terms at the galleys. This monstrous award was reversed, but there was luck in the reversal, for Napoleon certainly held some of our people—both soldiers and sailors—as galley-slaves until the conclusion of the war. On returning to Bitche the whole party were of course again relegated to the dungeon. O'Brien, for his part, stood absolutely at the discretion of Buché ; but (although Buché himself suffered eight days' punishment) the worthy man abstained from peaching.

Thus it came about that the indomitable Donat—flouting the galleys as before—got another chance. He had now for chamber-mates Hewson and Butterfield, midshipmen ; Batley, a dragoon officer of the East India Company ; and Barklimore, a surgeon. Butterfield was on the sick list ; but the other three listened with avidity to Donat's newest project. Hewson and Barklimore had already made one attempt. Their present situation in the fortress

allowed of no undertaking less desperate than an imitation of that which had cost Essel his life at the foot of the ramparts. No one of the four shrank from it, albeit O'Brien's rope (now smothered in a handkerchief) for climbing and sliding down from those terrific walls, was little stouter than pack-thread.

Their door being locked at dusk they had, it seems, some means of unlocking it; and on the night of the 13th of September, 1808, they stood for six hours at the edge of the yard in a whelming rain, their eyes on the sentries, not one of whom stirred from his post. The next evening beheld them again on the alert. Towards seven the soldier nearest to them stepped into his box, and O'Brien moved noiselessly across the yard, attached the slender rope to a palisade, and let himself down the first rampart. Hewson followed, and "In a few minutes, to my inexpressible satisfaction, we were all four at the bottom of the first wall." Two walls were still to be essayed. "We all clapped on to the rope, and crawled up with our feet against the wall, until we got a good height. We then swung off together, when the rope broke, and we fell upon one another, leaving in our hands enough to enable us to descend the next rampart. We made this piece fast to one of the upper stones of the embrasure, and again descended. We had now to repeat our haul upon the rope, and it again broke, leaving a piece of sufficient length for our future purpose, the descent of the third and last rampart." They had wisely provided themselves with hooks, and for the final drop of thirty feet these proved invaluable, as they could find no other hold for the rope. All four crouched safe at last in the *fosse* below the third



“We all clapped on to the rope, and crawled up with our feet against the wall.”



rampart ; then, at the turn of the sentry on his beat, crawled up the scarp and rolled themselves down the glacis. On the Strasbourg road, with bounding hearts, they ran for life, scarcely stopping in an hour.

“ We now turned round to take, as we hoped, a final view of the Mansion of Tears, the name that had been so long given to this detestable fortress by the unfortunate prisoners, many of whom had shed an abundance, or showers of them, within its horrid cells and dungeons. We spontaneously returned our thanks to Almighty God for our deliverance, and shook each other cordially by the hand, overwhelmed with exultation at our almost miraculous success. When we looked at the stupendous heights of the rock and fortress, it seemed as if a miracle alone could have enabled us to descend them, suspended by so slight and ill-made a cord as that which we had been enabled to construct out of our shirt-linen and a little cobbler’s twine.”

At the dimmest of day on the 15th they clambered into a steep wood ; and, as morning grew, looked down upon the flight of mounted guards, unleashed from Bitche,—the van of the pursuit.

All night of the 15th they trod an eastern course to the Rhine, under pilotage of the stars ; and it was on the starlit morn of the 19th that the vagrants touched these welcome banks. Nay, their feet were somehow guided towards the very boat that they had prayed for. Hewson and O’Brien fashioned a pair of simple oars, and they rowed themselves across, staking the boat carefully on the farther shore, and in two minds to leave a coin at bottom for the owner.

Twice now had O’Brien carried himself out of

France ; and he and his friends shogged along, carolling, towards the Black Forest. So elated were they that at the first inn upon the road they called for a barber, and were turned into gentlemen, and sat down to a regal breakfast. Batley, the dragoon, fallen utterly lame, was their principal concern ; and at a village on the other side of Rastadt they had to leave him in the hands of a benevolent innkeeper, who pledged his utmost service.

By the third week of September, O'Brien, Hewson, and Barklimore (the last incessantly at grips with ague) had penetrated to the borders of the Black Forest. " I never in my life," says O'Brien, " beheld a country so mountainous, dismal, and barren " ; but adversity is rarely shorn of comforts, and at a post-house of Kriemhieldsach the " three French travellers " were pressed into a dance, and Hewson—with the gusto of abstinence—waltzed till his bones ached. A fortnight's travel from this point, and they were toiling under the first snows of autumn. Brave it as they would, every town was still an object of alarm ; and, like the thief of Shakespeare, they saw in every bush an officer. By mountain pass, through forest and morass, they came to Neubeuern, overjoyed to learn that another fifteen leagues would bring them to Salzburg. Here on a branch of the Inn was a ferry-boat, and while they awaited the pleasure of the ferryman an elderly hatter seated himself beside them and fell to gossiping. Fain would the fugitives have asked whether passports were called for at that spot ; but the ferryman had finished his dinner and was approaching, accompanied by a soldier with so terrific a feather in his hat " that it seemed ominous of our capture and subsequent fate." Should this man accost them,



O'Brien and his friends were prepared to make off in different directions ; but he passed on towards the high road without the condescension of a glance ; and in the company of the latter they were ferried unquestioned over the Inn.

Twelve leagues were covered this day ; there was but one more Bavarian town, Reichenhall, to get clear of ; the Austrian frontier must be almost in sight. " We advanced apace, but with precaution, knowing how particular they generally are on the frontiers. We also agreed, if we could get immediately safe into Austria, to avoid Salzburg altogether and make directly for Trieste. Barklimore was becoming exhausted. The roads were rough and dreary, not a village or human dwelling was to be seen, even to the utmost verge of the horizon. As we drew near to Reichenhall, we overtook two waggons, and prevailed upon one of the waggoners to give a lift to our lame and disabled companion. Never was an arrangement more fortunate, for no sooner had he got accommodated in the waggon than two Bavarian gendarmes came in view. Hewson and myself sought concealment on the other side of the road, and thus did we escape detection."

Within a couple of miles of Reichenhall, Barklimore set foot to ground ; and here it was that the most signal perils of the enterprise must be met or evaded. They dared not try in the gathering darkness to feel their way on the outside of the town ; and, compassed with mountains as they were, what chance existed of groping a passage through them to the frontier before morning ? They resolved on one more night at a Bavarian inn.

" At the dawn of day on the 17th of October we rose, ordered a cup of coffee each, and pushed for-

ward with great circumspection for the town of Reichenhall, and saw very few people moving. Everything, we imagined, favoured us; but the next moment we discovered a bridge, which we inevitably must pass; at the end of it was a turnpike and the Bavarian colours, blue and white, which we were tolerably well acquainted with. There were two men who appeared at a short distance from the turnpike. We were on the bridge. The two men entered a house close to the turnpike. We advanced rapidly. Supposing it to be a most favourable opportunity, we passed the turnpike very fortunately, and turned short round to the right, which led us directly as we wished, and also clear of the town. We then passed another barrier, where there was not a house to be seen, and being so near to that we just passed, we conjectured that both were superintended by the same people.

“Having anticipated all aggravations of difficulty as we approached the frontier, we were overjoyed at finding the system of police not so strict as we expected: we now considered ourselves safe. We advanced a mile, and thought ourselves in the Austrian territories. Our happiness was inconceivable. Our dangers, we thought, were over, and we were now in a country which, though not in alliance with England, had been subsidised on former occasions to the extent of so many millions by her, and had so common a cause with us in putting down the general enemy. We felt almost as if we were at home. So secure were we that we began to be less attentive to dangers of any sort.”

In less than an hour all three were under arrest.

O'Brien and Barklimore, taking a short cut through fields, lost sight for a while of Hewson, who

kept to the high road. All at once O'Brien, a little distance in front of Barklimore, discovered to his extreme alarm that they were still in Bavarian territory; for there before him stood a turnpike with the blue and white symbol of peril. Not a creature of the official sort was in sight; he got safely past, and a rearward glance told him that Barklimore had been as fortunate. But what of Hewson? As they halted in trepidation, the mid-shipman came flying towards them. On the very line of demarcation an Austrian had requested him to produce his papers. These, he had replied, were in the keeping of the friends behind him.

This was the most embarrassing posture since Étapes. The Austrian barrier confronting them, the Bavarian at their tail: a fine blind alley they were tumbled into! One of them espied a by-path skirting a precipitous ascent, and that way they incontinently fled. Running, skulking, crawling, and scrambling, they made neither pause nor turn till the minutes of their flight gave them the certainty that they had well overpassed the frontier line of Austria. Drawing breath at last on a broad high road, they were once again rendering thanks, when O'Brien was aware of three rifle-barrels covering their three heads, while a fourth polite person doffed his hat. "This was very like the scene in *Gil Blas*, when the beggar piteously implored the traveller in the name of the Holy Virgin to drop a marvadie in his cap, whilst he kept his carbine aimed at his head, as a broad hint of what he was to suffer if he were uncharitable."

These, however, were not brigands in the guise of alms-seekers. They were very well-mannered Austrian soldiers, whose sergeant, still cap in hand,

remarked that duty compelled him to take the gentlemen before his officer. "We are in the Emperor's dominions, in *Kaiserland*, are we not?" asked O'Brien. "*Ya, Mynheer.*" This assurance made happy prisoners of the three; and, in presence of the young officer, O'Brien had resort to the American trick of *Étaples*, modified for a crisis in Austria. "We made him understand as well as we could that we were Americans, who had escaped from the Danes at Altona, and were making the best of our way to Trieste, where we expected to procure a passage to our native country." The dread of the prisoners was that the young officer, a little nettled at their manifest endeavour to evade him and his guard, would give them walking orders to Bavaria. He decided instead for Salzburg.

## VI

At Salzburg they arrived in the early afternoon of October 17th, and were lodged with no incivility in the Town House. Here they underwent a courteous interrogation by the chief of police, who regarded them as spies. It was an obvious rejoinder that spies would scarcely be imprudent enough to travel without passports, and they had not in their possession a morsel of paper or a lead pencil. O'Brien stuck to it that they belonged to an American ship which had been taken by the Danes. Their examiner began to be impressed, and observed that *were they even Englishmen they had nothing to fear from the Austrian Government*. "My God!" exclaims O'Brien, "I never felt more happy than at hearing these words." On the point of making a clean breast of it for all of them, he decided that it might be as well

for the present to persevere with the American figment. The chief of police allowed them to go to a tavern for the night, and requested that each would set on paper a detailed statement of his case. The taverner received them as honest Yankees; they supped on his best cheer, and were “superlatively happy.”

But now, with statements to prepare in writing, were it not both honest and politic to out with the whole truth? This was O'Brien's counsel, and Barklimore and Hewson acquiesced. O'Brien was again deputed spokesman, and he entrusted the chief of police with their history in full. “I related the whole of our history. He regretted much that he could not instantly grant us passports, since it was necessary to acquaint the Government at Vienna, and have their sanction, but he said we should have an answer in fifteen days at most; and he jocosely added, ‘You have been five years nearly in France, so you cannot have any objection to remain among us for a few days.’ He was excessively kind; and I could not avoid communicating to him that our finances were reduced to the lowest ebb. The kind old man soon comforted me on this score, by stating that, whilst we were detained, the Austrian Government would allow us a certain sum per diem, in proportion to our respective ranks. He begged that we would make ourselves as comfortable as possible at our inn, told us to dismiss all care and anxiety from our minds, and requested, rather than ordered us, to keep ourselves within doors, until we heard further from him.”

In ten days word came from Vienna that the Austrian Government acknowledged the refugees as English subjects, and would grant them passports

to proceed where they pleased. " Good and gracious God ! what intelligence to people who have been nearly five years in severe and bitter slavery ! "

Behold them next in the diligence ; passports and money in their pockets ; the storms of fate silenced ; safe on the road to Trieste. This port was not reached until the evening of the 4th of November, when O'Brien, remembering his friends in bondage, despatched a letter to Tuthill and Ashworth. This secret missive, containing all particulars of the flight, achieved its destination, and assisted the two midshipmen to escape. O'Brien, Hewson, and Barkli-more were picked up by the *Amphion*, in which O'Brien had sailed in 1802. Almost the first person they met on board was the dragoon, Batley, who had steered his way out of Baden. Our six heroes of Bitche are thus accounted for.

O'Brien rose to the rank of rear-admiral, and died May 13th, 1857, at Yew House, Hoddesden, in his seventy-third year.

V

MORGAN OF THE ROUGH-RIDERS

AN EPISODE OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

“ . . . *To waite, to ride, to ronne.*”—SPENSER.

“ *Turning his face to the dew-dropping south.*”

“ ROMEO AND JULIET.”

“ *There's rue for you.*”—“ HAMLET.”





## MORGAN OF THE ROUGH-RIDERS

### I

THE American Civil War brought to the front no bolder or more skilful leader of cavalry in the Army of the South than General John H. Morgan of the Mounted Riflemen, or Rough-Riders. Swift and venturesome in surprising the enemy, he was no less cunning and adroit in eluding him. No antagonist ever knew where Morgan would be found or what tactics he would adopt. In the wildest and most difficult region he seemed perfectly at home ; and could keep, as it were, " in his head " any country in which he was operating.

Morgan's command, moreover, was a splendid one. Few men in his division were above twenty-five years of age ; fine horsemen all ; keen and hardy in the saddle ; willing to stick there till they dropped out of it asleep or numb with cold : and to every man the General was a hero. The division had been engaged in almost daily combat, against all arms, and under all conditions of the campaign.

In the summer of 1863 Morgan was selected by General Bragg to make a diversion in Kentucky. He was to destroy the railroads, capture what depots of supplies he could, and keep the Federals on the move. Some 2500 men were detailed for the expedition.

Morgan had *carte blanche* to go where he pleased in the State of Kentucky, but his orders were not

to extend the raid beyond the Ohio River. He privately resolved to disobey General Bragg's instructions, and to lead his troops across the Ohio River and invade Indiana and Ohio. They would probably, he thought, be captured; but he was even more convinced that in no other way could he give substantial assistance to the forces of the South.

If, in a manner, this was the greatest—the most heroic at any rate—of Morgan's raids, it resulted in little less than disaster. Starting the first week of July, he was in the toils before the month was ended. The Ohio River, which had risen very suddenly, was up; but here, if at all, Morgan must cross. He was well-nigh over, when, seeing that the mass of his troops would be left on the Ohio side, he made his way back. Breaking for the interior like a fox for cover, he was at large six days more. Exhausted, and no longer able to defend himself, he surrendered on the 26th of July near the Pennsylvania line, with three hundred and sixty-four men. By the failure of the expedition (though it was undoubtedly of some immediate benefit) General Bragg lost a grand division of cavalry, and Morgan not a little of his prestige.

It remained for him to effect, as a prisoner of war, an escape of extreme ingenuity and daring.

## II

On the last day of July, General Morgan, General Basil Duke, and sixty-eight other officers of Morgan's command were relegated as prisoners to the Ohio State Penitentiary at Columbus.

"We were placed," says Colonel Thomas Hines, one of the party, "each in a separate cell in the first

and second tiers on the south side in the east wing of the prison. General Morgan and General Duke were on the second range, General Morgan being confined in the last cell at the east end, those who escaped with General Morgan having their cells in the first range.

“From five o'clock in the evening until seven o'clock in the morning we were locked into our cells, with no possible means of communication with one another ; but in the day, between these hours, we were permitted to mingle together in the narrow hall, twelve feet wide and one hundred and sixty long, which was cut off from the other portion of the building, occupied by the convicts, by a blank partition, in one end of which was a wooden door. At each end of the hall, and within the partitions, was an armed military sentinel, while the civil guards of the prison passed at irregular intervals among us, and very frequently the warden or his deputy came through in order to see that we were secure and not violating the prison rules.”

The prisoners of war were, of course, allowed no intercourse with the convicts ; nor could they see a relative or friend except upon a written order and in the presence of a guard.

The talk by day ran chiefly on the means of escaping, and towards the end of October Colonel Hines worked out the plan that was carried into execution.

“It was this : I had observed that the floor of my cell was upon a level with the ground upon the outside of the building, which was low and flat, and also that the floor of the cell was perfectly dry and free from mold. It occurred to me that, as the rear of the cell was to a great extent excluded from the light and air, this dryness and freedom from mold

could not exist unless there was underneath something in the nature of an air-chamber to prevent the dampness from rising up the walls and through the floor. If this chamber should be found to exist, and could be reached, a tunnel might be run through the foundations into the yard, from which we might escape by scaling the outer wall, the air-chamber furnishing a receptacle for the earth and stone to be taken out in running the tunnel."

The air-chamber was found, as Colonel Hines had calculated; a contrivance six feet wide by four feet high, running the whole length of the range of cells.

On the 4th of November, with the approval of General Morgan, work was begun at the back part of Hines's cell, under the rear end of his cot. To prevent the daily inspection of the cell, Hines obtained leave to sweep it out himself. Five officers of the rank of captain were chosen to help in the enterprise. From the hospital were smuggled "some table-knives made of flat steel files," and with these a passage was cut through six inches of cement to the air-chamber. The progress of the conspirators was here arrested. "We found the chamber heavily grated at the end, against which a large quantity of coal had been heaped, cutting off any chance of exit in that way." A tunnel was their next task. "We cut through the foundation wall, five feet thick, of the cell block; through twelve feet of grouting, to the outer wall of the east wing of the prison; through this wall, six feet in thickness; and four feet up near the surface of the yard, in an unfrequented place between this wing and the female department of the prison."

Colonel Hines sat on guard at the entrance to his

cell, pretending to be absorbed in Gibbon's "Decline and Fall." The workers below, who were relieved every hour, adopted a system of signals by taps on the floor over the chamber. While they were diligently running the tunnel, Colonel R. C. Morgan, a brother of the General, was engaged on a rope of bed-ticking, thirty-five feet in length. The same artist converted the iron poker of the hall stove into a hook to serve as a grappling iron.

"The work was now complete with the exception of making an entrance from each of the cells of those who were to go out. This could be done with safety only by working from the chamber upward, as the cells were daily inspected. The difficulty presented in doing this was the fact that we did not know at what point to begin in order to open the holes in the cells at the proper place. To accomplish this a measurement was necessary, but we had nothing to measure with. Fortunately the deputy warden ignorantly aided us. I got into a discussion with him as to the length of the hall, and to convince me of my error he sent for his measuring line, and after the hall had been measured, and his statement verified, General Morgan measured the distance from centre to centre of the cells—all being of uniform size—and marked it upon the stick used in my cell for propping up my cot. With this stick, measuring from the middle of the hole in my cell, the proper distance was marked off in the chamber for the holes in the other cells. . . . We cut from underneath upwards, until there was only a thin crust of the cement left in each of the cells."

At this stage the party had to consider the question of ways and means, and from a sister in Kentucky Colonel Hines obtained a remittance of Federal

money, pasted into the back of a book. An old convict in the prison was bribed to bring in a newspaper, which yielded information as to trains southwards from Columbus. All that was now necessary, within the prison, was to ascertain the easiest place at which to scale the outer wall. There was a ladder in the hall from the top of which a view could be obtained, but to climb this would be to arouse suspicion.

“Fortunately the warden came in while we were discussing the great strength and activity of Captain Samuel Taylor, who was very small of stature, when it was suggested that Taylor could go hand over hand on the under side of the ladder to the top, and with a moment’s rest return in the same way. To the warden this seemed impossible, and to convince him, Taylor was permitted to make the trial, which he did successfully.”

From the top of the ladder Taylor perceived the double gate in the outer wall which the conspirators would have to scale.

Favoured by clouds, on the night of November 27th they crept one by one from their cells, descended to the air-chamber, passed through the tunnel, and came out close beneath the wall, over which they cast their grappling-iron. Mounting by means of the rope of bed-ticking, they crawled from the wing wall to the outer wall, and cut the connecting-cord of the prison bell. From the outer wall they slid to the ground outside the prison, “within sixty yards of where the prison guards were sitting round the fire and conversing.”

Colonel Hines had left in his cell the following note addressed to the warden, or governor, of the Penitentiary, whose name was Merion :

“ Castle Merion, Cell No. 20, November 27, 1863.— Commencement, November 4, 1863; conclusion, November 24, 1863; number of hours for labour per day, five; tools, two small knives. *La patience est amère, mais son fruit est doux.* By order of my six honorable Confederates.—Thomas H. Hines.”

Under the wall of the prison the comrades split for safety into two parties. General Morgan and Colonel Hines made for the railway station, caught a train for Cincinnati, jumped from it on the outskirts of the town, and, furnished with a guide at the house of friends, were presently making their way across country. Scurrying from point to point, they were cattle-dealers at one place, and at another citizens on the hunt for stolen horses.

In the small hours of December 1st, they stopped, hesitating, at the house of a Mr. Pollard, uncertain to which side this gentleman inclined. They roused him, and he took them into the family room, where a lamp burned dimly on the centre table. “ On the light being turned up, I discovered a Cincinnati ‘ Enquirer ’ with large displayed headlines announcing the escape of General Morgan, Captain Hines, and five other officers from the Ohio Penitentiary. The fact that this newspaper was taken by Mr. Pollard was to me sufficient evidence that he was a Southern sympathiser. Glancing at the paper, I looked up and remarked, ‘ I see that General Morgan, Hines, and other officers have escaped from the penitentiary.’ He responded, ‘ Yes; and you are Captain Hines, are you not?’ I replied, ‘ Yes; and what is your name?’ ‘ Pollard,’ he answered. ‘ Allow me, then, to introduce General Morgan.’ I found that I had not made a mistake.”

Their host set the fugitives on the path again,

and on the morning of December 6th they had penetrated as far south as the road from Burkesville to Sparta, in Tennessee. Emerging from the woodland at this spot, Morgan and Hines observed a woman at the door of her dwelling who waved them back. They retreated, and in a few minutes the woman signalled them again.

“She informed us that a body of Federal cavalry had just passed, going in the direction of Burkesville, and that the officer in command informed her that he was trying to intercept General Morgan. We followed the Burkesville road something like a mile, and in sight of the rear guard. We crossed Obey’s River near the mouth of Wolf, and halted for two days in the hills of Overton County, where we came upon forty of our men, who had been separated from the force on the expedition into Indiana and Ohio. These men were placed under my command, and thence we moved directly towards the Tennessee River, striking it about fifteen miles below Kingston, at Bridge’s Ferry, December 13. There was no boat to be used in crossing, and the river was very high and angry, and about one hundred and fifty yards wide. We obtained an axe from a house near by, and proceeded to split logs and make a raft on which to cross, and by which to swim our horses. We had learned that two miles and a half below us was a Federal cavalry camp. This stimulated us to the utmost, but notwithstanding our greatest efforts we were three hours in crossing over five horses and twenty-five men. At this juncture the enemy appeared opposite, and began to fire on our men.”

Morgan had a good horse under him, but refused to part company with the dismounted men. Hines insisted that the safety of all depended upon the



instant flight of the General ; and, thus admonished, Morgan, in the company of Hines himself and the four other mounted men, went away at the gallop. Hines’s advice was sound ; for the rest of the party, scattering and sheltering among the mountains, made good their way to the Confederacy.

Morgan and his companions on horseback, having crossed a spur of the mountains, were racing through a ravine when they saw coming full tilt down on them a body of the enemy’s cavalry. Hines in a moment realised that his own chance of escape was slender, and that only by a ruse could he assist the flight of Morgan. Spurring to the head of the Federal column, he shouted :

“ Hurry up, Major, or the rebels will escape you ! ”

“ Who are you ? ” returned the enemy officer.

“ I belong to the home-guard company in the bend down there. Hurry, or they’ll be gone.”

Wheeling round beside the major in command of the cavalry, Hines rode ahead with him.

“ We dashed on, I riding by the major at the head of the column about half a mile, when we came to where a dry branch crossed the road, and as it had been raining that day it was easily seen from the soil that had washed down from the side of the mountain that no one had passed there since the rain.”

In a twinkling the officer perceived that Hines had tricked him. “ I’ll hang you for it,” said he ; and Hines felt a halter about his neck and saw the end of it slung over the limb of a tree.

“ Seeing that the officer was desperately in earnest, I said : ‘ Major, before you perform this operation, allow me to make a suggestion.’ ‘ Be quick about it, then.’ ‘ Suppose that *was* General Morgan, as

you insist. Wouldn't I, as a member of his command, deserve to be hanged if I had not done what you charge me with?' He dropped his head for a moment, looked up with a more pleasant expression, and said, 'Boys, he's right; let him alone.' "

General Morgan made good his escape.

[The South received him with enthusiasm, but his breach of discipline in crossing the Ohio was neither forgotten nor forgiven. His next command found him short of troops, and the men were strangers to his methods and had known too little of him to be devoted to his fortunes. He led them on his last Kentucky raid, which was no success. At Cynthiana he met a superior force and was defeated. A month or two later, September 4, 1864, he was shot at Greeneville, Tennessee, in the garden of the house where he and his staff were quartered. It was at or about daybreak, during or at the close of an extraordinary thunderstorm. His generous and brilliant memory is cherished.]

The devoted Hines passed on amid his captors. Carried to Kingston, he was there informed that he would be sent next to Knoxville, Tennessee. This was the headquarters of General Burnside, a station at which Hines knew that he could scarcely escape recognition. Along with three fellow-prisoners, encountered at Kingston, he resolved upon another bid for freedom.

"It was perfectly clear, the moon about full, making the camp almost as light as day; and as the moon did not go down until a short time before daylight, we decided to await its setting. The door of the cabin was fastened by a latch on the inside. The night was cold. We had only pretended to sleep, awaiting our opportunity. When the moon



“Hurry up, Major, or the rebels will escape you!”



was down we arose, one after another, from our couches, and went to the fire to warm us. We engaged the guards in pleasant conversation, detailing incidents of the war. I stood with my right next the door, facing the fire and the three guards, and my comrades standing immediately on my left. While narrating some incident in which the guards were absorbed, I placed my right hand upon the latch of the door, with a signal to the other prisoners, and, without breaking the thread of the narrative, bade the guards good night, threw the door open, ran through the guards in front of the door, passed the sentinel at the camp limits, and followed the road we had been brought in to the mountains. The guards in front of the door fired upon me, as did the sentinel on his beat, the last shot being so close to me that I felt the fire from the gun. Unfortunately and unwittingly I threw the door open with such force that it rebounded and caught my comrades on the inside. The guards assaulted them and attempted to bayonet them, but they grappled, overpowered, and disarmed the guards, and made terms with them before they would let them up. All three of these prisoners, by great daring, escaped before they were taken North to prison."

There was bridling, saddling, and mounting in the camp; but Hines, well up meanwhile on the mountain side, sat and watched his pursuers on the scurry. Travelling then, somewhat at ease, by the morning star, he slipped by and by into a sedge-grass field, where upon the frozen ground he lay till sundown. "During the day the soldiers in search of me frequently passed within thirty steps, so close that I could hear their conjectures as to where I was most likely to be found. I remained so long in one posi-

tion that I thawed into the frozen earth ; but the cool of the evening coming on, the soil around me froze again, and I had some difficulty in releasing myself."

In the dark, at the foot of the mountain, he stumbled on a cottage, entered it at hazard, and asked for supper. As he was feeding, the man of the house came in, rifle on shoulder. Hines took him coolly ; said that he was buying horses for the Federal Government, and had an appointment next morning with a person at Kingston who had horses for sale : could he hire a canoe to paddle down the river ?

A canoe was found, but the river was conveniently high, and there was no possibility of landing Hines at the house he pretended to seek. " Put me on the bank somewhere near it," he said to his conductor, " and wait for me." Once on the bank, he made again for the mountains.

" For eight days," at the round-off of his admirable narrative, " I travelled by night, taking my course by the stars, lying up in the mountains by day, and getting food early in the evening wherever I could find a place where there were no men. On the 27th of December I reached the Confederate lines near Dalton, Georgia."

## VI

### GOOD-BYE TO BROTHER BOER!

#### CAPTAIN HALDANE'S THREE HUNDRED MILES FROM PRETORIA TO LORENÇO MARQUES

*" Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit."*

*" Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre."*

*" Gone to ground."*

*" No sun, no moon, no morn, no noon,  
No dawn, no dusk, no proper time of day."—HOOD.*





## GOOD-BYE TO BROTHER BOER!

### I

AMONG the curiosities of the Staats Museum, Pretoria (once described as the Boer Tower of London), is there by chance any fragment of "Wilson's death-trap"? Within a few weeks of the opening of the Boer War, Dr. Gunning, the Superintendent of the Museum, appealed to all fighting burghers, through the columns of the "Standard and Diggers' News," to be "on the look-out for any relics likely to be of interest—such as flags, lances, helmets, swords, etc." A morsel of "Wilson's death-trap" would have been worth keeping as a witness to the excellence of Boer marksmanship.

And what—so far behind us seems the Boer War to lie—was "Wilson's death-trap"?

In Estcourt camp the name had been given to a certain "moribund engine of war," the armoured train so-called. It was made up of a locomotive, five waggons, an aged 7-pounder muzzle-loading gun, and carried some 120 men. Unattended beyond the line of outposts, this "second-hand coffin" used to wheeze out of a morning, "heralding, by agonised gasps and puffs, and clouds of smoke and steam, its advent to the far-sighted, long-hearing Boer." It never did anything of the least account, but day by day enjoyed extraordinary luck, crawling back uninjured to the siding it had quitted at daybreak.

In command of the death-trap on the morning of

November 15th, 1899, was Captain Aylmer Haldane, D.S.O., 2nd Batt. Gordon Highlanders ; thirty-seven years of age and standing six feet one. As recently as October 21st Captain Haldane had been severely wounded at Elandslaagte, and had left hospital but just able to walk. At Estcourt, attached for duty to the second battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, he had been waiting his turn for the death-trap, and the death-trap had been waiting to do something quite worthy of its title. On the 15th of November a very fair record was achieved. At 5.30 a.m.—ordered to reconnoitre towards Chieveley—the train pulled out from camp ; at 8.50 a.m., the Boers, tearing it with shrapnel at six hundred yards, had laid the engine a wreck on the banks of a cutting.

Mr. Winston Churchill, a passenger in his capacity of war correspondent of the "Morning Post," has touched the episode finely in his narrative, "London to Ladysmith."

"I have had," he says, "the advantage, if it be an advantage, of many strange and varied experiences, from which the student of realities might draw profit and instruction. But nothing was so thrilling as this : to wait and struggle amid these clanging, rending iron boxes, with the repeated explosions of the shells and the artillery, the noise of the projectiles striking the cars, the hiss as they passed in the air, the grunting and puffing of the engine—poor, tortured thing, hammered by at least a dozen shells, any one of which, by penetrating the boiler, might have made an end of all—the expectation of destruction as a matter of course, the realisation of powerlessness, and the alternations of hope and despair—all this for seventy minutes by the clock, with only four inches of twisted ironwork to

make the difference between danger, captivity, and shame on the one hand, safety, freedom, and triumph on the other."

"Shame," of course there was none. The armoured train, in a situation hopeless from the outset, had made a stand that astonished the Boers.

Wearily, on foot and by train, the prisoners were carried to Pretoria, President Kruger's capital. Their treatment on the journey, Captain Haldane says, was handsome enough. In their sheds or tents at night they heard the enemy singing his "Old Hundredth." At railway stations, when they had got to the dignity and ease of a train, Dutch wives made love to them for a button from their uniforms. They were asked: "Do you think we are savages, after all?"

At Pretoria they were lodged in the Staats Model School.

From stage to stage on the progress from the point of capture Captain Haldane had pondered the chance of escape. At one juncture there was a possible leap from the train in a tunnel, but a peep from the window revealed any number of hairy men with rifles, and their well-trained eyes on every carriage.

## II

The arrival at Pretoria of Captain Haldane, Mr. Winston Churchill, and some fifty others, launches us on a history of escape which in one important detail holds a place apart. For a flight of many leagues through an enemy country, wild, unknown, dangerous in itself, and almost trackless, it would be prudent to go into training for a bit, or

at any rate to start in as good fettle as possible. By and by we shall see Captain Haldane and his two companions driven to prepare themselves for the adventure of their lives by three weeks of existence under conditions not less than appalling. This prelusory period of trial (issue of an accident unforeseen and not to be coped with), these endless, noisome days and nights of waiting in a narrow grave under the flooring of a bedroom, give to the whole enterprise a definite something of strangeness, of terror, of uniqueness. In the long chronicle of escapes a situation of absolute novelty is not easily discovered. Here is one, and it scarcely endures to be thought on.

When a flight is in contemplation it is important to have a clear notion of one's bearings. Fortunately for our friends, Pretoria ("named after Pretorius, the first governor of the South African Republic") is not a difficult town for the stranger who desires to get out of it. Planned in parallelograms, the sides forming them run nearly due north and south, east and west.

The men of the party of prisoners were marched to the race-course on the outskirts of the town, the officers were taken to the Staats Model School. This, "a substantial single-storeyed red brick edifice, is built at the corner of one of the parallelograms into which the town is subdivided, its length running approximately north and south. It is, as its name implies, an educational establishment for the youth of Pretoria, and is divided into a number of school-rooms and lecture-halls. It contains in all sixteen rooms in the body of the building, including two at each end. A long central passage runs almost

throughout its length, terminated by the end rooms, and across this is the passage from the front entrance to the door into the yard or playground. On both sides of the building is a verandah which extends along the exterior of the six central rooms, and this again is overlapped by the four end rooms. One of these end rooms is fitted up as a gymnasium, and another was used by us as a fives-court. Outside, a railing breast-high ran round the west and south sides, the two remaining sides being enclosed by a corrugated iron paling six feet and a half high. In addition to these, a wire netting ten feet high ran parallel to the paling but close to the building, and through this an opening immediately facing the back door led to the grass-covered backyard. Across the yard, in which were the tents of our soldier servants and the police guard, were some low buildings, which at the time of our arrival were connected with the corrugated iron paling previously referred to. A double row of trees ran close to the eastern paling. At night this yard was lighted by four electric lights. On the two sides of the building which did not look upon the street were private houses in gardens, that on the north side being used as a Red Cross Hospital, with a door of communication in the iron paling which opened into the school yard. The houses across the streets were occupied."

As for the guard, there were twenty-seven men and three corporals of the South African Republic Police, from whom were furnished nine well-armed sentries in reliefs of four hours. In every street of Pretoria were posted special constables armed with revolvers, "and in some cases accompanied by their canine friends." Detectives came frequently to

observe the prisoners at exercise, and it will presently be seen that they were careful note-takers.

Even with the aids of quoits, rounders, Sandow's exercises, and cards, it was none too easy to chase monotony at the Model School. "Sometimes," says Mr. Churchill, "we get a little fillip of excitement. One evening, as I was leaning over the railings, more than forty yards from the nearest sentry, a short man with a red moustache walked quickly down the street, followed by two collie dogs. As he passed, but without altering his pace in the slightest, or even looking towards me, he said quite distinctly, 'Methuen beat the Boers to hell at Belmont.' That night the air seemed cooler and the courtyard larger."

The best food for the mind was the project of escape. With this in view from the first, Captain Haldane and some others had contrived to get suits of dark cloth in place of the mustard-coloured reach-me-downs with which most of the party had been supplied. Attempts at bribing the sentries having failed, the prisoners fell back on their own resources. One plan after another, was discussed. Forged passports could be bought at a price, and with these it would be possible to travel by rail, but for fugitives ignorant of Dutch this must be a dangerous device. There was, however, the chance of boarding a coal train by night, and thus reaching the Portuguese frontier.

On the 7th of December two soldier servants belonging to the 18th Hussars got out, were captured at no great distance from Pretoria, and lodged in jail. "The escape of these men," says Captain Haldane, "made one feel that no time was to be lost, and all that was required was a slack and unobservant sentry, one who would during the dinner-

hour move a few paces from his post and provide the necessary opportunity."

By the middle of the following week a scheme was ripe for execution, but the only man to profit by it was Churchill,<sup>1</sup> who had an instant's chance, and seized it.

*Things without remedy*

*Should be without regard: what's done is done.*

Captain Haldane stayed upon events, and gave his mind to other plans.

Up to the date of Mr. Churchill's break there had been no roll-calls at the Model School, "and no apparent record kept of the number of prisoners." This was slovenly enough, for the officers were not on parole.<sup>2</sup> But the Churchill affair was sensational, the Government went wild, the fugitive's description was telegraphed everywhere, and the lines were drawn more tightly around the Model School.

The appetite of the plotters merely grows a little keener. Captain Haldane smells out some cupboards, raids and rifles them, and carries off a prize of three screw-drivers, two triangular files, and a pair of wire-cutters. These are to be of use, but not just

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Winston Churchill's artistic narrative in "London to Ladysmith" is incomplete. At the time of writing he was not at liberty to speak fully of the help he had received on the journey. In Captain Haldane's original story in "Blackwood" there are similar gaps. This history, when the Boer War drew to a close, was rewritten on a larger scale; and the volume, "How We Escaped from Pretoria," constitutes, I believe, the one detailed and veridical account of a flight from the enemy's capital. It has long been out of print.

<sup>2</sup> It was once or twice said, at or about the date of the escape, that Mr. Churchill had broken his parole. This is totally untrue. There were a few very special occasions (the funeral of an officer, for instance, when the old President rose up from his verandah, took his long pipe from his mouth, and doffed his tall hat to the procession) on which the inmates of the Model School were placed on their word of honour. Within the School there was no parole.

yet. The second plot is spade-work, the traditional and tedious business of digging by stealth. On Mr. Churchill's departure there were five occupants of Captain Haldane's room, and these were joined, at their invitation, by Lieutenant Le Mesurier of the Dublin Fusiliers—a man of considerable inches, a great digger, and his companion in the escape.

Dividing themselves into three reliefs, and establishing a system of signals, the party of six went to work a few days before Christmas.

“Several detectives and the inspector of police inspected the building and surroundings with a view to prevent a recurrence of the event of the 12th, and the result of their visit showed itself after a few days. The offices at the back of the yard, originally connected with the paling, were isolated, so that the sentries could pass behind and prevent anyone from climbing over ; the lower branches of the trees were cut off so that no dark place remained ; and the reflectors of the electric lights were adjusted in such a way that no spot was now in shade.”

“The scheme was to sink a shaft about twelve feet deep by five in length and three in width, and from the bottom of this to drive a tunnel diagonally under the street on the western side of the building for about one hundred feet. This would bring us under a kitchen-garden, whence we could easily escape after dark, unseen. For digging implements we used our screw-drivers, and succeeded in breaking through some three feet of caked earth as hard as concrete. After this was penetrated the work became easier ; but to our dismay, though not surprise, two feet deeper landed us in water. After many ineffectual attempts to get rid of it, by carry-



ing it to the most distant of the five compartments, we found that the inflow, especially after rain, greatly exceeded what we could bale out, and our second plan accordingly fell through."

Patience waited another day. Captain Haldane got hold of a tourist's map of South Africa, and laid out on paper the whole country between Pretoria and the border. There was talk of a general rising of the prisoners (I have alluded elsewhere to the practical impossibility of a scheme of this sort), but they could in no way arm themselves. Through the nights of the New Year Captain Haldane was unremittingly on the watch to climb the railings of the School, but the most amiable sentry on the beat declined a note of £100.

Here comes in the first touch of the romantic.

"We had noticed a man who occasionally passed the Model School, generally accompanied by a St. Bernard's dog. From his manner he seemed sympathetic and anxious to communicate with us, and he sometimes muttered some words as he passed. As time went on he took to signalling to us by the Morse code with his stick. As the police seemed very suspicious of him, he could not send more than a word or two, such as "British victory." The sentries became more suspicious of him, and I believe he was told not to pass the School. For a time, at any rate, he rarely was seen. At length a system of communication was arranged with him through the medium of the hospital, and we found out that we were indebted for our news to Mr. Patterson, one of the principal telegraphists in Pretoria. Matters were soon on a better footing. Our sympathetic signaller took to visiting a certain house, inhabited by Mr. Cullingworth and his family, and in the afternoon

he sent many messages to us from the verandah. As, however, his duties prevented him from coming daily, and his presence at this house was calculated to arouse suspicion, he instructed two young ladies, who, we imagined, were daughters of our opposite neighbour, in the art of signalling, and they undertook the risky work of transmitting to us the news with which he supplied them.

“Standing well inside the door, one would signal with a white flag, while the other, seated on the verandah, gave warning when a sentry or passer-by was approaching. By this means we now received, twice daily, the latest news, from the Boer point of view, of what went on at the front; and I believe that we were the recipients of the same telegrams which were laid before his Honour President Kruger.”<sup>1</sup>

Towards the middle of February, 1900, rumour ran that the officers were to be moved to a new building from which escape would be more than ever difficult. Someone now suggested the extinguishing of the lights of the whole district by cutting the wires, and at nine on the drizzling night of February 23rd our conspirators were assembled on the verandah of the School, “ladder in hand,” ready to creep forth. “Suddenly the lights in the building and yard went out, and like a flash we made for the gate through the wire netting; but scarcely had we reached the barrier of wire when the buildings and yard were again illuminated.” Back they crept to the verandah. Their accomplice in the plot of the lights had met with an accident and failed to complete his job.

<sup>1</sup> Until close on the end of the war the names of the Cullingworths and Mr. Patterson were, of course, not revealed. After peace was made Lord Roberts called on them, and the officers presented them with mementoes.

What was to be done now? Another day or two passed, and the report grew definite that the move to the new abode would be made immediately. The three who had resolved on an escape, Captain Haldane, Le Mesurier, and Sergeant-Major A. Brockie of the Imperial Light Horse (believed by his captors to be a lieutenant in the Natal Carabineers), were seated in their room in deep confabulation. "I have it!" exclaimed Haldane. "Let us go below. Let us hide beneath the floor." In a few moments the proposal was adopted.

"While they collected a few necessary articles, and with great difficulty began reopening the trap-door, which had been tightly screwed down, I went round the occupants of the room, all of whom readily consented to preserve the secret of our hiding-place. What we three hoped for was that the Boers would think that we had taken advantage of the darkness, bribed a sentry, and so made off. This was exactly what occurred, and strange to say, despite the precautions taken by the commandant to prevent such an occurrence, he concluded that we had gone. For once the mistrust which one Dutchman has of another stood us in good stead. We had the satisfaction of baffling the whole talent of the Pretoria police."

The trap-door was unscrewed and raised, and the trio descended forthwith to the noisome scene of their excavations. When they were safely ensconced the door was again secured. The conspirators had burnt their ships.

### III

The charnel where they had literally buried themselves, the strangest and most dreadful dwelling we

have glimpsed or shall glimpse in these adventures, is described by Captain Haldane.

“The floor was about two feet and a half above the ground, and the space below, which corresponded with the room above, was divided into five narrow compartments by four transverse stone walls on which the cross beams that carried the flooring were laid. Each chamber was about eighteen feet in length and three feet and a half in breadth and there were man-holes in the walls. A certain amount of air came into this damp space through small ventilators under the verandah, but the atmosphere was very close, and one could not see except by candle-light.”

But for four-and-twenty hours what mattered it! Sweet would the veldt smell in four-and-twenty hours. In four-and-twenty hours the stars would be lighting them to liberty.

It was on the night of the 26th of February that the friends went to ground, and at roll-call next morning their absence was known. Guards, police, detectives tramped over the Model School; walls and floors were sounded; but, though the trap-door should have furnished a hint, no Vidocq of the party thought of the cavity beneath it. Gradually the search drew off. A saw that Captain Haldane had used was the only booty.<sup>1</sup>

The telegraph began to click:

“8.20 a.m., 27th February, 1900.

“Yesterday evening three officers, prisoners of war, escaped from the Staats Model School, viz.:

“Captain Haldane.—About 6 feet 1 inch in height, walks with a slight stoop, thin, com-

<sup>1</sup> This relic of the enterprise, General Haldane informs me, is now in the possession of Mr. Winston Churchill.

plexion and moustache dark, wears a dark-coloured suit.

“Lieutenant Brockie.—About 5 feet 9 inches in height, erect, complexion and moustache fair. Has a habit of raising his eyebrows when talking. Has a long-shaped face, and wears a chocolate-brown suit.

“Lieutenant Le Mesurier.—About 5 feet 9 inches in height, strongly built, round face, complexion and moustache fair, small eyes. Wears a grey suit. Muscles powerfully developed, blinks his eyes.”

The descriptions, it will be remarked, are good; the detectives had made their notes with care.

Four-and-twenty-hours? Alas! the three were presently at the seventh day of their terrible captivity. Being but scantily supplied with food, they had to seek the aid of their principal ally overhead. This was the devoted Falkland of the Dublin Fusiliers, who contrived a small daily convoy of provisions. In the veritable “Little Ease” in which they lay (and, save perhaps in the dungeons of the Inquisition, there can seldom have been a worse), the prisoners were now suffering severely both from the lack of air and from the irremediable constraint of position. Creeping and crawling—their sole possible exercise—they developed in turn a form of “housemaid’s knee”; and, living mainly in darkness, every man’s head was bruised against beam and wall. Dirt was another misery, since they could receive through the trap-door no sufficient quantity of water for washing. Dark, stifled, hungry, dirty, and reduced to motion on all fours, the situation passes belief. For the seven days drag into fourteen, and still there is neither release nor the prospect of it.

But in the pages of "How We Escaped from Pretoria" never a whine rises out of this inferno. Latude, in his fetching and artistic way, is alternately lachrymose or vicious over sorrows or injuries of his own invention ; and Trenck's top note is shrill, tireless, and wearisome. Inimitable Tommy in the war of to-day chalks up " Savoy Hotel " over his dug-out, and " Piccadilly Circus " at a crossways in the trenches. And Captain Haldane, giving the slip to sentiment, tells us what books he read by tallow candle, what games of patience they played, what cigarettes Le Mesurier smoked ; how (to the common danger) one of them talked in his sleep and another snored, and how they had sometimes to smother their laughter over a joke. He would persuade us, against every tittle of the evidence of his diary, that they had exchanged the tedium of the School yard for a rest-cure in a grotto.

Reading between Captain Haldane's lines, we perceive how desperate the situation was growing, and that as the month of March advanced the imprisoned men must either perish or procure their release.

" Sometimes we felt a half regret that we had undertaken what was proving itself to be so futile and disagreeable an attempt to gain our freedom. Our friends above urged us to come up and live in the roof, or at least occasionally emerge into the room overhead and get some fresh air ; but we set our faces against such proposals. The fewer who know a secret the better. Others would get to know it, and as many of the sentries understood English, they might easily overhear and understand some indiscreet remark as to our whereabouts. We hardened our hearts, and decided to remain where

we were until the prisoners were exchanged, the campaign concluded, or ourselves too ill to bear it any longer."

Illness was now, however, a menace no longer to be played with ; and at this pass Captain Haldane sent up from underground a letter to pastor Hofmeyer, another and a friendly prisoner in the School, urging him to pretend to the Dutch commandant that, as the officers were on the point of rising, it would be prudent to remove them at once to the new building. Hofmeyer worked to his utmost on the suggestion, with no results. Captain Haldane and his two comrades set to work again on digging ; but this labour they were able soon to abandon, for in a moment the prospect of freedom opened out. Their friends above were to be transferred at once to the new building.

The three in hiding had been seventeen days and nights below, and had still some twenty-four hours to pass, but their hearts were fixed now on the journey that was to come.

"Friday, 16th March.—Day at length came, a day that will live long in the memory of my two companions and myself. For the last time we heard the commandant going his rounds, and wondered anxiously if all were present. By 7.0 a.m. we had not heard of any one having hidden, and all seemed busy packing. Breakfast at 8, and then the pre-arranged signal was heard, and we knew that all were present. A little later we heard Frankland's voice saying, ' All's well ; good-bye ! ' "

By a quarter past ten all the officers had left the School and were on their way to the new habitation. By midday the baggage had been carried out and the servants were marched off. The cabined three

stayed in their lair till nightfall, and then walked out of an empty prison. "Le Mesurier's legs gave way and he fell down ; and all of us, when we tried to walk, reeled like drunken men. Several minutes passed before we dared leave the room, and it was not till we were some distance from Pretoria that our limbs regained their wonted strength."

## IV

The escapes of prisoners of State or war show us so great a variety of disguises that we may note with interest how nakedly in this respect Captain Haldane and his comrades set foot upon the veldt. Brockie, to give himself the appearance of a wounded Boer, carried his left arm in a white sling, and wore the Dutch colours round his hat. This was the sole form of travesty among them, and Captain Haldane says : "We looked more like three moonlighters than anything else I can think of."

Le Mesurier and Brockie took the middle of the road, Haldane following at a short distance on the pathway.

Near the outskirts of the town a special constable eyed them with suspicion, but on Brockie's exposing his "wounded" arm he let them pass unchallenged, and in a little while they were clear of Pretoria and its suburbs. "Straight before us, high up in the eastern sky, shone the moon, dimming the brilliancy of the evening star which followed closely in her wake ; to the right the Southern Cross, and low down in the north-east Orion's Belt." These glorious guides the trio followed, walking in single file along a railway, listening to the baying of dogs all around them, now turning aside to avoid a



Kaffir kraal, and now dropping into a ditch almost under the eyes of a sentry. Le Mesurier, stumbling among boulders, twisted an ankle, but limped on with his comrades until they drew near to the first station on the line, thirteen miles out of Pretoria. Here it was decided to halt until next evening. They had made a good start for men in poor condition ; Le Mesurier, moreover, was lame ; and, as the reader will remember, the hue and cry had long ceased.

Sorely did they suffer from mosquitoes that night, but in the morning they beheld the sun for the first time during nearly three weeks.

“ When darkness at length came, we sallied forth from our retreat, crossed the river, then the railway, and reached the road. By the small scale map we possessed the railway appeared to make a considerable bend to the south-east, and as the road seemed to form the chord of the arc it would be shorter to follow it. But Transvaal roads are not as other roads, and are as unlike their counterpart in England as a lane in Devonshire is unlike the turnpike to Bath. Looking at a map of the Transvaal you are tempted to believe that once on the road, so clearly defined on paper, you have only to shut your eyes and go ahead. Try it, and you will find a close resemblance between yourself and the blind led by the blind. The highways in the South African Republic are innocent of metal—Macadam is a name unknown : they consist of nothing but deeply indented wheel-tracks left by the clumsy, ponderous transport of the country—the ox-waggon. As a Dutchman in wet weather leaves the main track where it has become swampy and marks out a line for himself, the natural consequence is that in

time the vicinity of a road becomes a maze of tracks, and to find your way in the dark and in an unknown district is nigh impossible."

This second night they were hunted by dogs; the dogs roused a patrol, and before the danger was over Captain Haldane and Le Mesurier were cowering to their necks in an icy stream, and Brockie was missing. Issuing from the water, which had done wonders for Le Mesurier's ankle, they waited for the sergeant-major until there could be no question that he was irretrievably lost to them. Brockie, however, was in one respect the best able of the three to take care of himself, being ready in the Dutch and the Kaffir tongues. The captain and lieutenant settled for the remainder of the night in a clump of bracken, and took a prophylactic of opium and quinine—soaked to the skin, five thousand feet above the sea-level, and battling incessantly with mosquitoes. At daybreak they were stiff with rheumatism, their whisky-flask had vanished, their provisions were water-logged, matches and tobacco ruined. But they had now made wide their bounds of freedom, and looked only to the success of the adventure.

Dropping at dawn into a valley, and seeking the railway by the lightning flashes of a coming storm, they halted somewhere on a hill, where Haldane, searching his pockets for a wet match, discovered that he had left his money-belt and compass at the last hiding-place.

"The risk of returning to look for them was too great, for on quitting our hiding-place we had noticed many lights in the neighbourhood, and the probability of finding the clump of ferns in the pitchy darkness was remote. Besides which, both

Le Mesurier and I were even now not entirely devoid of money, and it was doubtful if we should require what we still had. We therefore pushed on till by the light of the moon we saw in front of us a Kaffir kraal, and found that we were walking past a field of water-melons. The opportunity was too good to be lost. Since we left our hiding-place we had had no water save that which a shower had left in the hoof-marks of some cattle. We now sat down and simply gorged this thirst-quenching pulp."

Kraal dogs surprised them at their meal ; Captain Haldane rolled up a melon in his handkerchief, and they stole away. In the weariness of the march Haldane has a waking dream of Brockie.

" Brockie was in my thoughts, and I was wondering where he was and if by any chance we should meet him to-night at Elands River, for we had talked with him of making for that place. On the ground a little to my left I saw what seemed to be a man lying at full length, his elbows resting on the ground, his head between his hands. Telling Le Mesurier what I saw, we went nearer, but the vision of my fancy had gone ; yet it was so clear that I can recall it and the spot where it occurred with the utmost distinctness."

Sleeplessness, short commons, want of water, and the sheer difficulties of the country began to tell upon the wanderers, and in four anxious nights they had covered only thirty-six miles. Le Mesurier had preserved an army emergency ration (one tin of pemmican and another of cocoa, sufficient to support a soldier for thirty-six hours), and Captain Haldane had a scrap of biltong. Seated by a welcome pool, they broke into their last reserve, of which they ate about one-third in the raw state. They had reckoned

on a steady supply of mealies throughout the journey, but that harvest had just been gathered : “ not one single corn-spike remained.”

Supper ended (“ and seldom,” observes the Captain, “ have I enjoyed a meal so much ”) the pair resumed their dubious way. Captain Haldane had been told by a colonial that the grass at its longest would hide a man from view, and had therefore anticipated no difficulty with regard to hiding-places. But the grass was never tall enough for shelter, and often they lay for rest by the hour in a swamp alive with fever germs. One terror of the veldt was spared to them (and, by the way, they seem never to have met with snakes).

“ I have often since thought,” says Captain Haldane, “ that in our wanderings on the veldt we were fortunate to escape a grass fire, an everyday occurrence in these regions. Had it happened that one had come our way—and the tell-tale smoke we sometimes saw afar off showed how possible that was—nothing would have remained but to seek safety in flight, a course which would inevitably have led to discovery.”

The hour pretty quickly came when they had finished every scrap of solid food, and were living on occasional draughts of water. At this extremity they walked boldly (in a thunderstorm) into a Kaffir hut against a coal-siding. Five ebon natives were eating dry mealie-meal porridge out of a cauldron, and without a word save “ *Saca-bona?* ” (“ How do you do ? ”) our friends squatted down beside them and plunged their hands into the mess. The Kaffirs were phlegmatic but friendly, and the Englishmen contrived to make known to them that they were running from the Boers, and must get to

Delagoa Bay. Learning that the *baas*, or employer, of their hosts was an Englishman, they made signs that they wished to be taken to him. The *baas* was the manager of the Douglas Colliery, a Dane; and as Captain Haldane said that his own name was of Danish origin, they were soon on a cordial footing. In these circumstances it was easy for Captain Haldane to explain that his companion and himself "wanted to travel to Delagoa Bay concealed in a coal-truck": could the manager help them? The manager would, at any rate, do his utmost, and do it forthwith. His own mine was sending no coals to the coast, but at a small colliery close by three trucks were to be loaded next morning for Lorenço Marques, and he would try to have the loading postponed to nightfall, so that the runaways could reach their hiding-place unseen. Meanwhile he would place his visitors in the hands of the storekeeper of the mine; and this gentleman, Mr. Moore, took them to his heart and house. For the lean and footsore pilgrims of the veldt it was creation's dawn. They fed to repletion, had not a prick to fear from mosquitoes, and folded their hands to sleep. They slept till the day was warm.

"At 10 o'clock we were told that the medical man who had charge of the miners, and happened to be making one of his occasional visits, was coming in to see us. Dr. Gillespie, one of those fortunate beings whose voice and manner at once inspire confidence, now entered the shed. He told us that, purely on chance of hearing some news at the mine, he had driven over from Brug Spruit on the previous day, and stopping the night had chanced to hear in the morning that the escaped prisoners, of whom every one knew, had at length arrived.

“The extraordinary chain of circumstances which had brought us to the mine, exactly at the right time, was now made evident to us. Had not Le Mesurier delayed us owing to his sprained ankle, had not the thunderstorm driven us to the Kaffir’s hut, we should probably never have heard of Dr. Gillespie. It was not his usual day for visiting the mine. He now told us his plans for getting us safely over the border. To my amazement he said that he and some others had managed it for Churchill, and they would do the same for us. He told us to say nothing to any one of the fact that they had helped Churchill, and that when it grew dark he would drive us to another mine, where plans for the future would be matured. He added that we might now consider ourselves out of the country, our further movements would be so devoid of risk. Bidding us farewell till evening, and saying that the coal-truck plan was now at an end, he left us.”

After supper that same evening Moore led them across the veldt to the spot where they were to meet Gillespie. He was waiting for them in a light, two-wheeled cart with an efficient pair of greys between the shafts. “Climbing up beside him, we took our places on the front seat, and the hood of the trap was raised. We bade farewell to Moore, and, taking with us his earnest good wishes for our freedom, started.”

Dr. Gillespie’s goal was the colliery of the Transvaal Delagoa Bay Company, a drive of fourteen miles. The road in many places was as usual a mere maze of tracks, and so inky the night that the greys had scarce a chance of showing off their paces. For the most part they were going at a walk, and even at this pace the driver had often much



He was waiting for them in a light, two-wheeled cart.





ado to keep the trap from overturning. At a point where he crossed the railway the doctor cautioned Haldane to squeeze down behind the splash-board. At 1.30 in the morning of Saturday, March 24th, Gillespie reined in his greys near the office of the colliery. Here the passengers were to be handed over to Mr. Jno. E. Howard, who had managed Churchill's escape, and Dr. Gillespie was to return home.

"All was silent and deserted, except for the presence of the two Kaffir boys on guard outside the office. Dr. Gillespie got down a short way from the office, going on in advance to see if the coast was clear, and after a few minutes returned and conducted us into a room behind it. Here the occupant of the room and I mutually recognised one another. It was no other than the Englishman whom, as I related before, I had seen, with another, walk past the Staats Model School. That other very soon joined us, and was introduced to us as Mr. Burnham, the manager of the mine store. The first, whose name was Addams, was resident secretary of the mine. They now told me that they had passed the School, wondering how they could communicate with us to help some of us to escape. Addams left the room in search of the manager, who lived a short distance from the office. When he knocked at the door of Mr. Howard's room a voice said, 'Anything wrong?' The reply, 'Pumps broken down,' was given. Mr. Howard afterwards told us that he instinctively said to himself, 'They've come at last.' He had made up his mind that we should somehow reach his coal-mine, and had kept Kaffirs out night after night near the railway watching for us. He also had for nights past played

'God Save the Queen' on his piano, with the windows open, lest we passing that way should hear and crave admittance."

Howard himself next appeared, and a new plan was speedily arranged. Howard was to feign illness for a few days, and remain within doors, Haldane and Le Mesurier taking up their quarters with him. Here, by the way, they had news of Brockie, for whom, on his arrival at the same friendly spot, a passport had been procured as far as Kaapmuiden. Thence to the border, forty-six miles distant, an Englishman was to provide him with a Kaffir guide.

For Captain Haldane and Le Mesurier the scheme was this: A certain quantity of wool was still being sent to Lorenço Marques, and goods-trucks were often detached at Middelburgh, a short distance off. Concealed in one of these they could leave the country without involving Burnham in suspicion. Failing a convenient truck at Middelburg, Burnham would buy wool enough for one load, and send the runaways with it; he himself accompanying them, as he had accompanied Mr. Churchill. This was devotion indeed, for should anything discover the plot, Burnham, Howard, and the rest ran the risk of being shot.

Captain Haldane and the lieutenant passed the hours of daylight indoors, blinds down, and they both felt the need of rest. Haldane had lost in weight a stone and a half, and Le Mesurier was lame and sick.

While these two lay behind the blinds, Addams and Burnham, smelling out the railway line and its opportunities, were quietly at their policy, which was in some degree a game of bluff. In the end it

was decided that Burnham should buy up a truck-load of wool, and an offer of the consignment was wired forthwith to a firm at Lorenço Marques. To heighten the romance of the situation, nothing was needed but this indispensable commercial touch of the little affair in wool. A certain firm in Lorenço Marques will buy sixteen bales of wool, or will not. On this very commonplace transaction hangs for the moment the fate of two British prisoners of war, and behind the deal we have some half-dozen disinterested gentlemen prepared to take the chance of being shot for their part in it.

The firm at Lorenço Marques replied, accepting the truck-load of wool.<sup>1</sup>

From a station a little way up the line the truck arrived on the 26th of March, and through their blinds Haldane and Le Mesurier watched how Burnham and Addams loaded it for their concealment.

“In order that the reader may better understand the kind of place we were to occupy for sixty-three hours, I will describe it in as few words as I can. The bales of wool, weighing each four hundred pounds, were in size about five feet long by two feet and a half broad and the same in depth. There were in all, I think, sixteen to be loaded into the truck. The truck itself was an empty coal-waggon, about eighteen feet long and seven wide, with sides of some three feet in height. Three bales of wool were laid end on at one side of the truck and three on the other. Above these were laid three parallel

<sup>1</sup> General Haldane writes me: “The firm—a German one—afterwards repudiated their telegram. The wool lay unsold at Lorenço Marques, and the price meantime fell. Eventually it was sold at a loss of £75, which I paid to Burnham.”

rows of three bales each ; and as there were only two rows on the floor of the truck, occupying a total breadth of five feet, there remained a kind of tunnel down the centre of the truck. Other bales were placed above those already in position, and when all was done there remained a space for us to sit in at the end of the truck three feet by seven. This space was available because the waggon was eighteen feet long, and three bales endwise occupied only fifteen feet."

We are at the moment of another start ; and behind the blinds Haldane and Le Mesurier, while turning their garments inside out, are debating the hazards of the stage before them. They had beaten their way through the veldt, but once inside the truck no line of retreat would be open to them.

## V

At 5 a.m. they climbed into the vehicle which was to be their habitation for two days and a half. Some thirty minutes of darkness had been spent in storing supplies and making all snug. Their kind friends had provided them with a week's larder—roast duck and chicken, smoked beef, bread and butter and jam ; nine bottles of cold tea, two of water, and one of whisky.

The tarpaulin was made fast, and for the next five hours the stowaways lay extended on the floor of their abode. At ten o'clock Mr. Howard came along again, asking if all were well, and taking a final leave of the guests he had so well befriended. He had but just got rid of Field-cornet Pretorius, who had shown himself mighty suspicious concerning the tablecloth in Howard's dining-room,

and seemed only half satisfied with the manager's tale of a little dinner and card party.

It was noon, or past it, when the wool-truck was taken by a colliery engine to Whitbank Station. Here, though the captain and lieutenant knew nothing of it, they might easily have been discovered. On the look-out at Whitbank were Addams and Burnham, who, to their extreme alarm, saw the Dutch driver and stoker stroll up to and lean against the precious truck. A word or a sneeze from the inside and the whole plot would have been blown upon. Addams, telling the story afterwards, said :

“This was more than I could bear with equanimity, and I strolled over to them and invited them to come with me across the line and have a drink. They declined, stating that they could not leave the engine ; and presently the driver took a sheet of paper from his pocket, and flattening it out on the smooth side of the truck, began to write a letter. My anxiety was intense, for the slightest noise would have been heard, and I walked past on the other side and tried by some words which I muttered to give you warning to keep still. While the shunting operations prior to your departure were going on, one of the station employees undid the tarpaulin and looked into the truck.”

All this while, however, Haldane and Le Mesurier lay tight between the bales of wool, mum as mum.

At 2.30 they were attached to a passenger train, and by mid-afternoon were alternately climbing and gliding down the beautiful wild steeps of the veldt, smelling at last like the gardens of liberty. At a place called Waterfall Boven the train drew up for the night, starting again at 6.20 next morn-

ing. This day's progress brought them to the last station in the Transvaal, Komati Port. Here, if anywhere, the wool-truck would be searched,<sup>1</sup> and here therefore they flung overboard the most of their provender. "We fully thought that, having got so close to the border, we should be in Portuguese territory this day; and on reaching the frontier station it was a bitter disappointment to find ourselves detached and pushed into a siding."

In anticipation of a search the refugees had withdrawn into their tunnel, whence they could hear Kaffirs chattering in the siding a few yards away. So sure did Captain Haldane make of a perquisition of the truck, that—bent on bribing the first-comer—he drew from his pocket a bag containing a hundred sovereigns, and then tore from his diary a few pages of compromising matter.

"The next moment a chill shot through me, and my thoughts returned to Pretoria. We heard the rattle of the links as the ropes of the tarpaulin which were tied to them at our end of the truck were loosened. The moments that followed defy description: so many thoughts were crowded into one's mind, thoughts of recapture and ruin to all hopes of seeing more of the campaign. Soon the tarpaulin was lifted up and thrown back over the top of the truck. What happened neither of us occupants will ever know, for we dared not move to look; but the daylight from above and from the end of the tunnel flooded in upon us, and we

<sup>1</sup> General Haldane sends me the following copy of the original telegram in his possession: "Actg.-Commissioner, Pretoria, to Supdt. Komati Pt.—'In continuation of my telegram *re* escaping officers, you are ordered to let no goods or passenger trains in which are goods, pass before the same have been immediately searched. This is to hold good till further orders.'"

felt that discovery was unavoidable. The search must have been most perfunctory, though in our excited imaginations it seemed to last an age. Then the tarpaulin was returned to its place, the ropes made fast, and the Kaffirs resumed their chattering."

Had the officers been seen or not? To this day General Haldane can give no answer to the question. It may well have chanced that they were spied by a Kaffir (the order as to searching is plain enough), who, perceiving two stalwart white men, judged it prudent to retire.

Stifling in their hole under the tarpaulin they passed hours of suspense. Nothing happened. Evening deepened into night, and night—wretched and mosquito-haunted—broadened at last into morning. It was Saturday, and by Friday they had hoped to be in the Portuguese lines. Food and drink, so much had they cast away, were running short. At 9.40 the train steamed off, and a minute later, in the middle of Komati bridge, the friends grasped each other by the hand. Five minutes more, and, peeping through the tarpaulin, they beheld the white conical pillar which marks the boundary between the Transvaal and Portuguese territories. It was the pillar of freedom. For Captain Haldane and his companion their Anabasis was at an end.

At Ressano Garcia, the first Portuguese station, the train came to a stand; but the two passengers in whom we have an interest did not alight. Plagued with thirst, they waited in their miserable hold until the dusk had fallen, and then crept out from and beneath the truck. At a Kaffir kraal within a handbreadth of the station they learned that the Ressano Garcia hotel was kept by two

Englishmen, and thither they dragged themselves. Is there a reader who will grudge the champagne opened by the proprietors in their privy parlour ?

There is no more to tell. From the village of Ressano Garcia the hardy comrades took easy train to Lorenço Marques, where, at the Cardoza Hotel, everyone seemed in possession of the secret of their flight from Pretoria. "That evening," says Captain Haldane, "I gave Mr. Douglas, the courteous correspondent of the 'Times,' a brief account of our adventures, omitting everything about our having hidden under the floor of the Model School. My reason for doing so was that Le Mesurier, Brockie, and I had, in the interests of those who had helped us and fed us and remained behind, bound ourselves to say nothing about that part of our story until the end of the war."

Everything was in some degree fortunate in this escape, which at any stage might have been frustrated ; but, with all the help they got, it depended mainly on the pluck and endurance of the adventurers. They paid some penalty. Le Mesurier was down at once with enteric and afterwards with malarial fever. Brockie spent some weeks in hospital. Captain Haldane had two attacks of malarial fever. But they obtained their desire, getting back to duty in the Boer War.

From General Haldane in France I have received this interesting and pathetic postscript :

"Of my two companions in the escape from Pretoria, both are dead. Sergeant Brockie, I believe, rejoined the Imperial Light Horse, and after serving through the remainder of the campaign, held some appointment in one of the Rand mines.



There he lost his life a few years later, being crushed to death by a mass of ore which fell upon him.

“ Captain Neil Le Mesurier whom, in the years succeeding our wanderings on the veldt, I met from time to time, also went through the remainder of the campaign. Thereafter he left the Army and entered the Colonial service. The last time we met was in London, where he was studying law, during his leave from West Africa. In November, 1914, I was able to assist him to rejoin his old regiment—the Royal Dublin Fusiliers—the 2nd Battalion of which formed part of the 10th Infantry Brigade, which I was then commanding. Before his arrival, however, I had been transferred to the command of a division. My intention was to take him on my staff as aide-de-camp so soon as I had a vacancy, and in the interim I had his name registered for another staff appointment. But fate willed that we should not again meet in this life. When the Germans made their attack with gas in April, 1915, my old brigade, with other troops, was moved from the south to assist in repelling it. The brigade was heavily engaged east of Ypres and suffered very severe losses, and on the 29th April I heard with deep regret that my old friend was missing and believed to be among the killed. This proved to be true, and the only details I have been able to gather are that he fell at the head of his company, and that his fearless behaviour in face of the enemy was such that for him to have escaped death would have been miraculous.

“ Lieutenant T. Frankland, also of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who was taken prisoner on the armoured train, though he did not leave Pretoria when we did, very materially assisted us in doing

so. Some time before the present war began he was, at my request, appointed Staff Captain of my brigade, and served with me until the 6th September, 1914, when, being the senior officer of the 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, he, at his own request, resigned his appointment in order to command it. For this good service in the field he was twice mentioned in despatches and promoted brevet-major; later he was appointed brigade-major of an infantry brigade and accompanied the expedition to the Dardanelles. There he lost his life while making a reconnaissance soon after the troops carried out their difficult and hazardous landing. He was an officer who displayed great coolness under fire, and possessed accomplishments much above the average, and from the time I first knew him in South Africa I felt that he would go far in his career."

The following profoundly interesting details of Major-General Haldane's military career have been very kindly furnished to me by a friend:—

Major-General James Aylmer Lowthorpe Haldane, only son of the late D. R. Haldane, M.D., LL.D., of the ancient family of Haldane of Gleneagles, in the county of Perth; was born in 1862. Educated at the Edinburgh Academy and Wimbledon School. He subsequently entered the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, from which he passed out with honours, and joined the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders in 1882.

He served for three and a half years as adjutant, and obtained his captaincy in 1892. In 1893 he exchanged to the 1st Battalion of his regiment stationed at Rawal Pindi, India, having passed his final examination at the Staff College in the same year.

He served in Waziristan, 1894-95 (medal and clasp), under Lieut.-General Sir William Lockhart as orderly officer, and remained with him as A.D.C. from 1896-99; served with 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders in Chitral, 1895 (medal and clasp); in Tirah, 1897-98, as D.A.A.G., Headquarters Staff—actions of Chagrukotal, Dargai, Saransir, Dwatoi, capture of Sampagha and Arhanga passes; operations against Chamkanis, and in Bara and Bazar Valleys (despatches, D.S.O., and two clasps). On the outbreak of hostilities with the Boers in the latter part of 1899, Captain Haldane obtained permission from Sir William Lockhart—then Commander-in-Chief in India—to rejoin his regiment. Both battalions of the Gordon Highlanders were ordered to South Africa, and Captain Haldane served with the 2nd Battalion, which formed part of the reinforcements sent from India to Natal. He took part in the Battle of Eelandslaagte on 21st October, 1899, was severely wounded and sent down to Pietermaritzburg. As soon as he was well enough to get about, Captain Haldane asked and obtained permission to proceed to Estcourt, where he was attached for duty to the 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers; and on November 15th he was placed in charge of the armoured train, which on that date was derailed by the Boers under Joubert, near Chieveley, when on its return to Estcourt.

In the first volume of the "Officers' History of the War" in South Africa there is a full account of the incident, showing how splendidly Captain Haldane and the men with him behaved in a disaster which had come about by no fault of theirs.

General Buller, in commenting subsequently on

this unlucky affair, recorded his opinion that "the officer in command acted in trying circumstances with great judgment and coolness." Captain Haldane was slightly wounded on this occasion, and taken prisoner with another officer.

The captured officers were confined in the State Model School in Pretoria, whence Captain Haldane escaped. On rejoining the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders he took part in the operations in Natal, at Laing's Nek, those in the Transvaal east of Pretoria, from July to November, 1900, and in the actions at Belfast and Lydenburg.

For his services in South Africa he was mentioned in despatches, awarded the Queen's medal with four clasps, and a brevet-lieutenant-colonelcy, to take effect the day after attaining his regimental majority, which was obtained on July 23rd, 1902.

In February, 1904, Lieutenant-Colonel Haldane was appointed military attaché with the Japanese army, Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5; he was present at the battles of Liao-Yang, Sha Ho, and Mukden, receiving the war medal and clasp and the Order of the Sacred Treasure and being decorated with the C.B., in 1906, for his services.

After holding several appointments on the General Staff at the War Office he was made Brigadier-General, General Staff, Eastern Command, in October, 1909, and in March, 1912, selected to command the 10th Infantry Brigade and troops at Shorncliffe.

Br.-General Haldane commanded this brigade during the retreat from Mons, and in the subsequent advance to the Aisne on 26th October, 1914, he was promoted Major-General for Distinguished Service in the Field, and on the 21st November appointed

to command the 3rd Division of the British Expeditionary Force. His name has thrice appeared in despatches during the present campaign. General Haldane is a Knight of Grace of St. John of Jerusalem, and an officer of the Legion of Honour.



## VII

### FROM EXILE TO EMPIRE

#### PRINCE LOUIS NAPOLEON AT THE FORTRESS OF HAM

*“Vicissitudes of fortune.”*—GIBBON.

*“Strait is the gate and narrow is the way.”*—MATTHEW VII. 14.

*“Tie up the knocker ! Say I'm sick, I'm dead.”*—POPE.





## FROM EXILE TO EMPIRE

### I

AT daybreak on Easter Sunday, 1831, a lady, very pretty, very elegant, and of the most marked distinction, entered a carriage at the door of her hotel in Ancona, and was driven at a brisk pace from the town. What lay upon the lady's mind on Easter morning?—for she had explained and excused this matutinal start by the statement that she wished to hear mass at Loreto. On the box rode a young footman; and he also, perhaps, had a conscience to purge at Loreto, for his face was extremely pale. A second carriage followed, containing a lady's maid and another footman; and it might almost have been thought that the whole party were in quest of ghostly counsel and consolation at Loreto, for all wore a look of concern.

In 1831, Italy (moved in degree by the recent example of Paris, which had despatched King Charles X on his inglorious travels) was here and there in insurrection. The secret society of the Carbonari had been active, and more active at this date were the Austrians—of whom the Peninsula has bitter and terrible memories. As the lady's carriage drew near to the Austrian lines she peeped forth anxiously into the growing day. But the lady was furnished with a passport (nay, with passports); and, murmuring “. . . to hear Mass at Loreto,” she was allowed to pass. Reaching Loreto, however,

she continues her journey at the same rapid rate ; does not stay for Mass at all.

Through the Papal States she drove with speed, her hand often in her purse for relays of post-horses. The Tuscan territory was now to be traversed. By way of Siena, Pisa, Lucca, and so on (how exquisite a journey in Italian springtide for travellers at their ease !), the lady was bound apparently for distant Genoa and Nice. At Camoscia (or Carnoscia) there is a most uncommon incident. Post-horses were not forthcoming, the hour was late, the lady must tarry. But the pale-faced footman conceived a sudden objection to the hotel, which, to be sure, was crowded with political refugees. Was ever mistress kinder, more complaisant ? For, if the lackey, looking sickly enough, would pass the night on a stone bench in the street, the lady, for her part, would pass it in the carriage. And in this way indeed the night was spent.

Even more curious is it when for the second time the Tuscan frontier has been crossed. The footman of the pale visage, who moves with an invalid's gait, disappears for a space ; returns in spruce attire, and takes his place by the side of the charming lady.

Through Massa, through Genoa, the two carriages whirl towards the French frontier. By Antibes, by Cannes, France at last is entered : France from which, for nearly sixteen years, the pair in the flying carriage have been exiled. With a burst of tears the beautiful lady sinks on the shoulder of the youth.

Thus, to unfold the slight mystery, did Hortense de Beauharnais (tenderest if not wisest of mothers), Duchesse de St. Len, ex-Queen of Holland, daughter of Napoleon's Josephine, stepdaughter and niece of Napoleon, snatch from Austrian bullets or a possible

halter, the sole surviving of her three sons, Prince Louis Napoleon, aged twenty-three, the future Napoleon III.

Carbonaro or not (the point is unsettled, but Carbonaro in all likelihood he was), the young Prince had borne himself in Romagna with courage worthy of his name ; and had he fallen captive to the Austrians it had certainly gone ill with him. The triumphant flight, here but outlined, owed everything to the skill, coolness, and daring of the devoted mother—whom Napoleon I had not admired for nothing. This first appearance of Louis Napoleon in Italy has an interest rather personal than political. It is his *début* on that stage of romance where he was to play so astonishing a part.

## II

The law was not rescinded that ruled the Bonapartes out of France, and Paris was closed to them. King Louis-Philippe received Hortense with friendliness,—and ousted her without delay. She took her son to England, where they stayed three months ; and in the latter days of summer they were back at her retreat of Arenenberg on the Lake of Constance. Here, amid the mountains of Switzerland, a lovely and melancholy haven, Louis Napoleon lived and brooded five years. He studied and wrote ; dallied and played the lover. Had he married the gifted and radiant Mathilde, his cousin, fate might have played him fewer tricks. But for romance, if ever it were mortal's destiny, this man was born ; and from the winsome and gracious Mathilde he was gradually and inevitably sundered. From a *débile* habit in boyhood and youth he grew into a strong,

contained, inflexible, and imperturbable man ; nursing his Napoleonic Idea ; willing and prepared to encounter for it opposition, obloquy, disaster. On these terms with fortune, and in the winning society of his mother, Louis Napoleon lived five years at Arenenberg.

In the summer of 1836 he was a little over twenty-eight, and France was scarcely aware of his existence. On the evening of the 24th of October, bidding his mother good night, he spoke of his intention to join a hunting-party next morning. He had been at Baden for a few days, and Hortense was doubtless aware that he had had a meeting with his new friend Persigny. Perhaps she suspected something more than a hunting-trip ; at any rate, she drew from her finger and placed on her son's the most precious of her jewels, the ring with which the Emperor had wedded her mother. It was almost their last earthly meeting.

On the morning of the 25th, accompanied by his valet, Charles Thélin, the Prince set out to " catch the dying rays of the sun of St. Helena " : in simpler terms, to seize the throne of King Louis-Philippe. From Strasburg he was to march on Paris, as Napoleon had descended from Elba. Fifteen adherents unknown to fame were picked up by appointment (Persigny was in advance of the party) ; and at dusk on the 28th the Gilbertian force advanced on Strasburg. Colonel Vaudrey, commanding the 3rd and 4th Artillery regiments (the 4th was Napoleon's old regiment), had already been won over.<sup>1</sup> It may have been of moment, it may have been of none, that, on Persigny's advice, it was resolved to postpone action to the 30th. The 4th

<sup>1</sup>. The comedy of Colonel Vaudrey and Mme. Gordon in this affair is entertaining, but the space for it is wanting.

regiment was stationed in the Austerlitz Barracks ; and to this place, at about six on the morning of the 30th, the Prince and his desperate fifteen proceeded. In the dark morning, a thin snow drifting here and there, Vaudrey was ready for them ; the 4th saluted the Emperor's nephew with shouts of "Vive l'Empereur !" and he marched out of barracks at their head. One of his friends ran off to seize the printing offices and print the proclamation. Crowds began to gather in the streets. At the Place d'Armes Louis Napoleon made a personal call on General Voirol, governor of Strasburg, who, refusing to join him, was placed under arrest. He escaped almost immediately. The prefect of the town had been made prisoner by Persigny.

The regiment next to be considered was the 46th, in the Finkmatt Barracks. Here for a while all went well. On a sudden someone at the back of the courtyard shouted to the soldiers that they had been befooled, that the Prince they were acclaiming was not the nephew of the Emperor.

"Instantly the whole aspect of affairs was altered. The faithful were confirmed in their resistance, the waverers rallied to the voice of authority. For the Prince it was a paralysing blow. Had he so wished he might by this time have been in command of 150 pieces of cannon ; instead, he had preferred to rely solely on the magic of his name. And now in a moment this weapon was struck from his hand. To some extent it was even turned against him : for of the 46th, it was just the men who had been most ready to welcome the descendant of the Emperor who were most furious that they should have been tricked by the vain use of his name"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. A. Simpson, "The Rise of Louis Napoleon."

Briefly, by eight o'clock the fiasco of Strasburg was complete. It was to have been another bloodless progress from Elba. Had Louis Napoleon had beside him in the Finkmatt Barracks a brother of the superior courage and resource of Lucien Bonaparte, it might have been a second 18th of Brumaire. But the affair of Strasburg, the young Pretender's first *coup d'état*, had toppled in two hours. "So unexpected had been its sudden collapse, and so bright had seemed its prospect of success, that the messenger to whom Louis had entrusted his two letters to his mother had already despatched the one announcing the success of the undertaking."<sup>1</sup>

The Pretender had a taste of the Prefecture of Police in Paris, but the Government decided not to bring him to trial. His accomplices in the conspiracy appeared before the ordinary Court of Assize at Strasburg, and a local jury acquitted them. This in itself went some way to redeem the failure of their chief.

By Louis himself these tidings were received on the day he landed in America, whither by the advisers of Louis-Philippe he had been incontinently shipped. In the States he had settled but two months when news alarming and distressing was conveyed to him: the illness of his mother. He hurried back to Europe,<sup>2</sup> to the joy of the woman who had loved him as tenderly as he loved her. In the son's arms the mother died. Her death left him at odds with the world, for on the morrow of Strasburg the family had discarded him.

<sup>1</sup> Simpson.

<sup>2</sup> For many years it was thrown in his teeth that he had broken his parole. This was not true. The French Government had made no conditions whatever.

In the autumn of 1838 he was again a refugee in England (after turning very adroitly to his own account the quarrel over him between France and Switzerland); and at this date it might have been conjectured of an adventurer whose design was less consummate and far-reaching, and whose purpose was less resolute, that he had come to the end of his political tether. Disraeli, who has sketched Louis Napoleon with cleverness and sympathy in “Endymion,” was one of the few persons in London who recognised in the fashionable and easy-going “Prince Florestan”—an adventurer, in truth, like his own brilliant self—a man with a purpose in the world. From the beginning of 1840, in a word, Louis was meditating his second *coup d'état*, the adventure of Boulogne. As was usual with him, he worked out the details alone.

At about 9 a.m. on August 4th the steamer *Edinburgh Castle* (belonging to the Commercial Steam Navigation Company: James Crow captain), chartered for a month's “pleasure trip,” left London Bridge. All afternoon she lay off Gravesend, awaiting her Prince, who had been dodging the police in London. He came; and at Margate and Ramsgate certain others were taken on board. When at last she made for the French coast the *Edinburgh Castle* carried a very mixed crew and a queer assortment of merchandise. “We were sixty-two sworn confederates,” says Baron d'Ambès,<sup>1</sup> who was of the party, but the number is almost everywhere else given as fifty-six. Some twenty-four, says Mr. Cheetham, “were what may be termed gentlemen, and the rest (thirty-one in number) servants. The

<sup>1</sup> “Intimate Memoirs of Napoleon III.”

'gentlemen,' however, were rather a mixed company, and included the Prince's professor of fencing, his secretary, and a 'Polish captain.'"<sup>1</sup> Mr. Simpson says, "A certain number of Poles." D'Ambès has no mention of Poles. Undoubtedly the most interesting person, after the Pretender himself, was General Montholon, now in his 58th year. Montholon had shared the tragi-comedy of St. Helena, and was there when Napoleon died. Lord Rosebery very rightly speaks of him as a "correct and kindly man of the world,"<sup>2</sup> and his manner was full of charm.

There were in the hold muskets from Birmingham ; uniforms, new or second-hand, from Paris ; horses and fine equipages ; some dozens of wine, brandy, liqueurs, and ginger-beer ; and, "that no touch of auspicious absurdity should be lacking to the scene, fastened to the mast was a live eagle, forlornly surveying the seasick saviours of France."

According to the evidence at the trial, not more than four or five of the conspirators knew, when the *Edinburgh Castle* left England, either to what port they were steaming or on what mission ; but Thirria roundly declares<sup>3</sup> that everyone at the trial was fibbing.

In four boat-loads the reckless half-hundred (a good many of them hearty with tipples) landed at Wimereux, a league to the north of Boulogne. It was dawn of the 5th of August. Some Customs officers who refused to join the expedition were left unmolested. This was Louis's first mistake.

<sup>1</sup> F. H. Cheetham, "Louis Napoleon and the Genesis of the Second Empire."

<sup>2</sup> "Napoleon ; the Last Phase."

<sup>3</sup> "Napoléon III avant l'Empire."



He was met at Wimereux by Aladenize, a lieutenant of the 42nd Infantry, who led the party at 5 a.m. into the slumbering town of Boulogne. Somewhere in the lower town a sergeant and his four men were stationed; and these, like the Customs officers, declined the blandishments of the Pretender. They were left at their post, and this was Louis's second mistake. Next was encountered one Maussion, also of the 42nd, who, being pressed into the ranks of the insurgents, was presently allowed to slip away; and this was Louis's third mistake.

At the barracks of the 42nd the Prince and his merry men were allowed to march in; but even now the game was nearly up. For sub-lieutenant Maussion had pelted straight to the quarters of Captain Col-Puggélier, commandant of the detachment at Boulogne; and he, arriving at this instant, succeeded in ejecting the conspirators and getting the gates of the barracks closed on them. The Prince was now in a tight place. "Alas!" exclaims d'Ambès, "neither army nor population seconded us. . . . Perhaps it would have been wise to do no more. Bataille and Mésonan proposed to go to the Colonne de la Grande-Armée on the downs above the town and unfurl the Imperial flag. But a squad of men from the 42nd of the line had been detached, and these fell upon us. The Prince showed himself a hero, and was for dying there, at the foot of the column. . . . I make a last attempt to raise the citizens, and so find myself separated from my friends, who reach the shore." But the *Edinburgh Castle* lay a mile off; and as Louis and his followers threw themselves into the sea the National Guard, in hot pursuit from the column of the Grand

Army, opened fire and peppered them like waterfowl. One man was shot dead, and Louis himself received a slight wound. He lodged that night a prisoner in the Château of Boulogne; was carried early on August 8th, in a closed carriage with an officer at his side—a strong escort before and behind—to the Fortress of Ham; and on the 12th was taken in the same manner to Paris, and placed in a cell of that oldest of prisons, the Conciergerie.

He was set for trial before the Court of Peers on September 28th. "A little man dressed in black, slightly built, pale-faced, with a calm manner and a dreamy eye—this was the first vision which the Court of Peers had of their future Emperor."<sup>1</sup> Louis Philippe and his Government were weary of clemency. On October 6th "Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte" was condemned to "perpetual imprisonment" in a fortress situated within the continental territory of France.

### III

On October 7th, 1840, the very day that the *Belle Poule* frigate touched at St. Helena to bring back to Paris the body of Napoleon I, the future Napoleon III passed once more within the shades of Ham.

"Far away in the north-west of France, among the marshes of the Somme, lies the little town of Ham, which at that time contained a formidable fortress."<sup>2</sup>

"A picturesque and romantic building, it dates from Louis XI. The Connétable de Saint-Pol,

<sup>1</sup> Simpson.

<sup>2</sup> Father Lewis C. Price, "Archbishop Darboy and some French Tragedies: 1813-1871."

Louis of Luxembourg, who built it in the fifteenth century, gave it its gloomy aspect, which the rust of ages has heightened. Imagination, with slight help from the inspiration of history, can picture it the scene of all the incidents of feudal ages. What subjects for legend and ballad—towers, donjons, underground chambers, oubliettes even. Nothing is lacking of mediæval glamour. The fortress itself is a huge square building with a round tower at each corner. Curtain-walls connect these towers. The castle is entered by a drawbridge.”<sup>1</sup>

The captivity of Saint Helena, says Imbert de Saint-Amand in epigram, is an epilogue; that of Ham a prologue.<sup>2</sup> The prologue at first was rigorous enough. The State prison was an insalubrious place in an insalubrious region; and the new prisoner was soon to be affected with rheumatism, headache, and severe pains in the eyes. His quarters were dilapidated; and gaoler Demarle (the very officer who had arrested Louis at Boulogne) was for a while so strait in his government that the captive could obtain neither books nor writing materials. By and by the regime grew milder. Before the end of October Louis’s confinement was shared by Montholon and that other staunch friend, Dr. Conneau (he had been secretary to Louis Napoleon’s father, King Louis, and medical man to Hortense), who had printed with his own hand the Boulogne proclamations. Montholon had been sentenced to twenty years of “detention,” Conneau to five of “imprisonment.” The constant Thélin, acquitted by the Court of Peers, had begged leave to follow his master to Ham, and was incarcerated

<sup>1</sup> D’Ambès.

<sup>2</sup> “Louis Napoleon and Mademoiselle de Montijo.”

in May, 1841. St. Helena, as all records show, had not proved quite an ideal retreat ; but Montholon—growing stiff, to be sure—found Ham a good deal worse.

At Ham, none the less, time crept onwards ; and Louis, in a situation wretched as could be, and dim as to all outlook, showed himself a prisoner of character and quality. He could confront with a mind more equable and elevated than Napoleon's an immediate condition of adversity and a prospect of redemption about as real as the fabric of a dream. In any chapter on the recreations of prisoners Louis would claim an honest and interesting page. He wrote much, and planned to write much more. He dabbled at this and that in an amateur's laboratory. He gardened industriously in a garden where nothing would grow. He rode a horse to admiration within the circle of a circus-rider. He made love ; and the history of " La Belle Sabotière," Alexandrine (or Eléonara) Vergeot, the handsome daughter of the clog-maker, is still rehearsed at Ham.

It has been remarked upon as curious that a man so determined as Louis Napoleon allowed himself to live five and a half years in prison—five years and seven months. But he had excellent and honourable reasons for doing so. While his comrades of Boulogne were under lock he could make no attempt to liberate himself. In November of 1845 all had been released save Montholon and Conneau ; and Louis's thoughts turned to freedom. Negotiations with the Government (Lord Malmesbury was one of the first to befriend him<sup>1</sup>) came to nothing, and he decided to escape.

<sup>1</sup> Malmesbury (Earl of), "Memoirs of an ex-Minister: an Autobiography."

## IV

“In the history of celebrated escapes,” says Saint-Amand, “none is more astonishing than that of the prisoner of Ham. . . . Failure seemed inevitable, and one still wonders how a man could be rash enough to attempt such an enterprise. Anyone who glances at a plan of the fortress of Ham will find that the way in which the prisoner succeeded in getting out without the connivance of a single jailer or soldier is a miracle.<sup>1</sup> Some fortuitous circumstances, of which Louis Napoleon availed himself with unheard-of audacity”—and which will be plain in the narrative—“could alone have rendered this miracle possible.

“The Prince’s prison, guarded by three jailers, two of whom were always on duty, was on one side of the barracks, near the dungeon, at the back of the court. To go out of the only door of the fortress it was necessary in the first place to pass in front of the two jailers, cross the entire length of the court, go under the windows of the commandant, who lodged near the drawbridge, and through the wicket, where there were an orderly, a sergeant, a gate-keeper, a sentry, and lastly a post of thirty men.”

There is very little exaggeration in this. Louis Napoleon had gradually conceived the notion of

<sup>1</sup> Queen Victoria (*v.* “The Letters of Queen Victoria”) was but one among a host of lesser persons who fancied that “the authorities,” if they had no hand in this flight, must certainly have connived at it. There is no trustworthy evidence in support of this view. All trustworthy evidence, on the contrary, goes to show that the Prince’s escape was *bonâ fide* in every particular. The literature (good and bad) of this part of the story is considerable. The most trustworthy guidance is furnished by the rather prolix narrative of F. T. Briffault. In writing “The Prisoner of Ham” (1846) he had the assistance of the Prince himself, who gave him documents.

walking out of prison alone, in broad daylight, within sight of everybody in and around the fortress. The escape is one of the simplest, one of the adroitest and most artistic in history. "*C'est bien joué*"—"It was neatly done," said Paris and France, when the flight was a fact achieved.

That he might not emerge a pauper (for Boulogne and its consequences had beggared him: he had paid or pensioned everyone to the uttermost), Louis had secured through his friend Count Orsi a loan of £6000 from that eccentric of eccentrics among exiles, the Duke of Brunswick, whose stock has furnished England with kings, and whose jewel-box provided Europe with a story that is not surpassed in Stevenson or Dumas.

To Degeorge<sup>1</sup> (or Degeorges; several names in the narrative are variously spelled) the Prince wrote: "The desire to see my father once more in this world has urged me to the most audacious enterprise I have ever attempted; one that demanded more courage and determination than Strasburg or Boulogne, since I was resolved not to endure the ridicule attaching to a man arrested under a disguise, and a failure would have been insupportable."

There were three persons in the prison whom Louis might make privy to his project: his fellow-captives, General Montholon and Dr. Conneau, and the devoted valet, Thélin. To Montholon, for whom he left a letter, and who was offended that Louis had given him no other good-bye, not a word was breathed. Conneau was taken into Louis's confidence when it was no longer possible to exclude him: Conneau's aid was indispensable. The plan was

<sup>1</sup> Editor of the "*Progrès du Pas-de-Calais*," to which paper, from *l'ancien*, the Prince had been a contributor.

impossible, said Conneau. It was so totally impossible, urged Louis, that nothing could prevent it from succeeding ;—what, then, could Dr. Conneau do but throw himself on the prisoner’s side ? He did so ; and between them they devised the scheme of the great evasion.

Chief among the “fortuitous circumstances” to which Saint-Amand makes allusion was the presence in the fortress of a gang of workmen engaged on a repairing job. Well, what if the Prince should turn workman for the nonce ? Ham was not exactly the place to climb out of, and the means of digging oneself out were not available. But were it possible simply to stroll out ? Louis may never have read a history of the *Bagnes*, though these prisons (supplanters of the galleys) were in existence, I fancy, until the year that he ascended the throne. But the notion came to him which had haunted the brain of many a *forçat* of the *Bagne* (and that irrepressible prison-breaker, Victor Desbois, had tested it with eminent success) : that a happy disguise may serve a shrewder turn than file, rope-ladder, or pickaxe.

It must have been at this stage that Thélin was added to the Prince’s council. The valet, who at first had been subjected to a very close confinement, enjoyed at this date complete liberty of egress and ingress. He went on errands into Ham ; could absent himself for hours. Thélin could buy in Ham a workman’s costume ; Dr. Conneau in the laboratory could reduce it to an honest shabbiness.<sup>1</sup>

One thing is important to remember at this point. The commandant of the fortress had no suspicions of his prisoner. Quietly and on the whole very

<sup>1</sup> Thélin procured the whole disguise for 25 f. 25 c. : a sovereign and some halfpence.

studiously he had lain all these years at Ham, and not only the Commandant but the Government in Paris seem to have been of the opinion that he was not anxious to release himself. In five years and more he had attempted nothing. On the other hand, it was always more or less on the Commandant's mind that, as Briffault says, "partisans from without might make an effort to release him." Strict orders were therefore issued "to prevent all persons whatsoever from approaching the fortress, and from stationing themselves under its walls; and during the first years, especially, the sentinels' orders were not to obstruct persons going out, but carefully to prevent any from coming in." Manifestly this was something that favoured the plan of escape.

Since, however, the fortress, though stout enough, was but a little place, it could from the ramparts be at all points easily commanded; hence a disguise of some sort was, on the whole, indispensable.

Day by day, while the workmen were at their job (a little over a week), the Prince and Dr. Conneau studied them closely, overlooking not a detail that might serve their scheme. They noticed that some old timber was now and then carried out from the place. This was another inspiration. To conceal his features as he crossed the prison yard, it would help the Prince if he carried a plank on his shoulder, and he had the very thing at hand: a loose shelf of his little library.

This agreed on, Briffault condenses the plot for us in these terms:

"Charles Thélin, as he had several times done before, asked permission to go to St. Quentin; he was to go and hire a cabriolet for the purpose. As he was leaving the prison to go and find his



cabriolet, the Prince was to go out at the same time, in the disguise of a workman. This combination had two advantages; it left Thélin at liberty to turn aside the attention of the keepers and soldiers from the pretended workman, by playing with Ham, the Prince's dog, which was well known, and a great favourite with the garrison; and, moreover, it gave him an opportunity of always addressing himself to those who, taking the Prince for a workman, might be disposed to speak to him.”

Here I may pause for a moment to show exactly where the Prince was installed in the fortress, for the position of his lodging complicated the difficulties of the escape. From Hachet-Souplet<sup>1</sup> we learn that Louis and Montholon and the doctor were placed in this way :

*Ground Floor*

Door.

- |     |        |                              |
|-----|--------|------------------------------|
| No. | 1.     | Room used as a chapel.       |
| „   | 2.     | Montholon's study.           |
| „   | 3.     | Bathroom.                    |
| „   | 4.     | General Montholon's bedroom. |
| „   | 5 & 6. | Guardrooms.                  |

Staircase.

*Story Above*

- |     |          |  |
|-----|----------|--|
| No. | 7.       | Louis Napoleon's study.                  |
| „   | 8.       | Dr. Conneau's bedroom.                   |
| „   | 9.       | Louis Napoleon's bedroom.                |
| „   | 10 & 11. | Rooms of which the doors were walled up. |
| „   | 12.      | Laboratory.                              |

Staircase.

<sup>1</sup> “Louis-Napoléon, Prisonnier au fort de Ham.” A book of interesting detail, not always to be relied upon.

Thus, before carrying his plank out of prison, the Prince had first of all to carry it downstairs. On certain days, Conneau had remarked, one of the two guardians on regular duty at the foot of the stairs went out for the newspapers, and was absent from his post for about a quarter of an hour. This would leave but one man for the valet to parley with, and this must be the moment of escape.

Due note had been taken of the extraordinary precautions adopted in respect of the coming and going of the considerable body of workmen. On their "passing through the first wicket, as they entered, they were obliged to defile one by one, and to pass under the inspection of a sergeant's guard, and a keeper especially appointed for that purpose. The same form was observed, and the same attention paid on their going out in the evening, besides then the Commandant himself was always present. They observed, moreover, that whenever any of the workmen went alone to any retired part of the citadel they were strictly watched, but when they went out for the purpose of fetching tools or materials of any description, by following the direct road, and thus exposing themselves to view for a considerable distance, they excited no distrust, and were allowed freely to pass through the wicket and over the draw-bridge. The Prince, therefore, determined to adopt the last-mentioned plan—the boldest, it is true, but offering the greatest chance of success."

The plot was no sooner knit up than it must be executed, for the workmen were finishing their task.

The chances of the moment being allowed for, the plotters had a margin or time-limit of two hours, from six to about eight in the morning; and here

again a "fortuitous circumstance" helped them, for Commandant Demarle, usually abroad at sunrise, was crippled with the rheumatism of Ham.

Everything was devised for Saturday morning, the 23rd of May. On Friday evening Demarle, over a hand at whist in the Prince's room, announced that two English friends had been granted leave to call on him the next morning. Visitors more unwelcome could scarcely have dropped into the town; but to deny them would be impolitic. They came, and their profit to the Prince was a passport that his diplomacy extracted from them. His valet, he said, wanted to take a little journey. Would his friends be kind enough to lend him the passport of their courier? It was given at once, and proved serviceable. By this delay the plot was two days to the bad, and the situation grew hourly more serious; for the workmen in the fortress had got nearly to the end of their repairs, and there might be few coming in on Monday. Monday, again, for another slight reason, would be a worse day than Saturday, since the workmen would be wearing their clean clothes, and Dr. Conneau had treated Thélin's purchase for an exit at the end of the week. But it must be Monday, or never; for by evening of this day the hired men would be out of the prison, and the run of life there as usual.

Sunday was a long day of anxiety. Louis Napoleon had twice risked his life in rather high adventure. Twice he had miscalculated everything, and each miscalculation had made him sacred to the unsparing ridicule of France. The printed caricatures of the two bids for empire are a witty and merciless mock of him. His very pride appeals to us in this situation; and the new risk he runs; for a failure to

escape in a ludicrous disguise must bring a "cataract of laughter" on him.

Very early on Monday, in the bedchamber of the Prince, what a scene of quiet and intensely dramatic interest. Behind the close-drawn curtains the three conspirators are at their stealthy final preparations. Dr. Conneau and Th  lin, Briffault remarks, have drawn off their shoes "in order to avoid noise." Through the blinds they are watching for the coming of the workmen.

"All was still silent in the interior of the court—the sentinels alone paced slowly up and down before their sentry-boxes. By a singular accident the only soldier in the garrison whom they were anxious to avoid was this very morning on duty before the Prince's door. This man . . . was accustomed to exercise a very scrupulous surveillance over the workmen; and the Prince had already remarked him examining all their movements with the greatest attention, looking narrowly at their persons, and asking them where they were going."

In ordinary, this man would have remained at his post until seven; but, by another happy accident, "the hours of mounting guard had been changed in consequence of a review on Sunday," and at six o'clock the unpersuadable grenadier was removed.

The workmen had already entered the fortress, passing between two files of armed soldiers. They were fewer in number than usual, and, the day being Monday, were all in clean array. As it was a beautiful and dry morning, none of the men wore sabots, and the watchers had duly noticed that there was no joiner among them. Now it was in the disguise of a joiner that Louis proposed to leave his prison,

and sabots were included in the costume. The sabots he especially needed, for he was to pull them over his high-heeled boots, thereby increasing his height to the extent of three or four inches. He decided for the sabots, and obviously the rest of the costume must be used as it stood. Thélin, razor in hand, stood ready to shave off his master's moustaches. But if the moustaches went, and anything now happened to mar the plot, the loss of those embellishments would at once betray it to Demarle. Risk all, gain all; and the razor went to work.

“It had been arranged,” Briffault informs us, “that after having brought the labourers and artisans into the dining-room to give them a morning dram, Thélin should go before the Prince, on the stairs, in order to turn away the attention of the keepers. The Prince once in the courtyard, Thélin was to follow him closely, in order, as has been said, to call to him any person who might seem disposed to speak to the Prince.” To get the warders clean out of the way was impossible. On the previous evening Demarle, going his rounds, and finding some of his guard absent from their posts, had given the strictest orders that one at least should always be at the wicket, while a workman remained on the premises.

But it was now full time to dress for the part. Rheumatism or no rheumatism, the Commandant would doubtless be abroad betwixt seven and eight o'clock. Thélin himself has left us the best description of the Prince's travesty :

“The Prince put on his usual dress, grey pantaloons and boots; then he drew over his waistcoat a coarse linen shirt, cut off at the waist, a blue cotton

handkerchief, and a blouse, not merely clean, but somewhat elegant in its cut ; and, finally, he drew on a pair of large trousers of coarse blue linen, which had been worn and were very dirty. Under these he concealed the lower part of the first blouse, and finally put on, over all, a second blouse, as much worn and dirty as the pantaloons. The rest of his costume consisted of an old blue linen apron, a long black-haired wig, and a bad cap. Being thus apparelled, and his hands and face painted with red and black, the moment of action being at hand, all emotion had ceased ; and the Prince breakfasted as usual with a cup of coffee, put on his sabots, took a common clay pipe in his mouth, hoisted a board upon his shoulders, and was in readiness to set out."

Under his apparel the Prince had slipped a poniard (it is certain that he meant this cast to be decisive) and a small portfolio containing his twofold talisman—the last letter written to him by his mother, and Napoleon's letter to Hortense on his birth. These letters, to be sure, would identify him were he taken ; but Louis was a fatalist. He was a seer, says Thirria, and had seen his escape. Should he be seized, he would kill himself.

There were workmen engaged on the stairs ; and Thélin, hovering on the threshold of the Prince's room, hailed and accosted them. Such a rare morning : wouldn't the comrades take a pick-me-up with him ? It *was* a rare morning, and they would. Saint-Amand remarks that they "empty several bottles." While the first bottle is circulating Thélin hastens upstairs and gives the word to his master. "But the two warders, Dupin and Issali, are on duty at the door, and how is their vigilance to be eluded ? Thélin, who has gone down again and is

chatting with them, observes that the Prince was seriously ill during the night.”<sup>1</sup>

The seriously ill, meanwhile, was at this moment leisurely descending the stairs with his plank.

Thélin held the two warders in parley, and the Prince passed out at the door.

“Now he is in the court, the whole length of which he has to traverse. He keeps the plank constantly between himself and the sentries and other persons whom he meets. When passing in front of the first sentry he lets his pipe fall, stops a moment to pick up the pieces, and walks on again. Next he meets the officer of the guard, who, however, is reading a letter and does not notice him. The Prince passes under the Commandant’s windows, close to the only door of the fortress. Until now he has not been recognised. But will it be so at the wicket? The soldiers at the guard-house seem surprised at the dress of the pretended mason. The drum rolls several times. The orderlies, however, open the door, and the fugitive is outside the fortress.”<sup>2</sup>

Not quite out of danger, though, for a few yards beyond the gate he encountered two workmen, who regarded him, as he fancied, with attention. The Prince shifted his plank to the other shoulder, and, as he did so, one of the men said: “Oh! it’s Bertrand.”

Still bearing his plank, he continued his way along the rampart; and Thélin, who had followed him out of the fortress, now hurried on to fetch the carriage he had hired the night before—“from one Fontaine.”

As far as the Saint-Quentin gate the Prince guided

▪ Saint-Amand.

▪ Saint-Amand.

himself by the rampart, then took the faubourg of Saint-Sulpice, and after that the high road. At a cemetery a mile and a half from the fortress Thélin should join him. Arrived at this spot he flung the plank into a ditch. On the 6th of the next month he was to write to his friend Vieillard (once his brother's tutor) : " When about half a league from Ham, while awaiting Charles, I found myself opposite the cemetery cross, and fell on my knees before it, and gave thanks to God. . . . Do not laugh ! There are instincts stronger than all philosophic arguments."

Scarcely had he finished his prayer when the fortunate Charles drove up with Fontaine's cabriolet, and now they had less than an hour's spurt to Saint-Quentin. At this blest conjuncture (if d'Ambès may be trusted), Prince and man shared a meat pie, which the best of valets had bought in the town. On the outskirts of Saint-Quentin Louis sloughed all of the workman that was possible ; and, in some degree himself again, walked openly through the streets, while Thélin went to secure a post-chaise. He applied, says Briffault, at the post-house, whence the postmaster, Abric, had just come out ; but Thélin was well known to Madame Abric ; he told her he was obliged to go with all speed to Cambray, to return early, and begged her to order a post-chaise and horses, with all possible haste, while he would leave at her house his horse and cabriolet. The kind Madame Abric showed the greatest alacrity to have Thélin served, and ordered horses to be put to her husband's small chaise. She pressed him very much to stay for breakfast ; but, perceiving that he was anxious to proceed, she did not venture to urge her request. The traveller, however, with great polite-





He keeps the plank constantly between himself and the sentries.



ness, praised the remains of a cold *paté*, which was on the table, of which she begged him to accept a slice, and which being carefully wrapped up, soon afterwards furnished an excellent breakfast for the Prince, for which his long walk had provided an excellent appetite.

“ In spite of his impatience Thélin dared not to hurry too much the post-people, for fear of awaking suspicions, yet the Prince had for some time arrived at the other end of the town of St. Quentin, and was waiting, not without some concern, for the carriage which was to overtake him. He laboured for a moment under fear of having been left behind while examining the town ; but seeing a gentleman coming in a carriage from the Cambray road, he asked him whether he had not met with a post-chaise ? This gentleman, who answered him in the negative, was the Procureur du Roi of St. Quentin ”— who, by the way, had the Prince suffered capture, would have been charged with the prosecution.

Five minutes later, Abric’s little carriage, with two good horses, drove up. It was not yet nine o’clock, and there was evidently no pursuit. The next stage was Valenciennes, reached at two in the afternoon. Passports ? Yes, of course ; and the Prince produced the lucky one he had received on Saturday from those tiresome English friends. And now, the train to Brussels ? Alas ! the train to Brussels did not leave till four. Two hours to wait ; and Demarle might have paid his morning call on his prisoner, and the telegraph might be at work. And here at the railway station was another peril : an official of some sort, who had been warder at the fortress or policeman in Ham, recognised Thélin, and had questions to ask and a rigmorole to tell. Also, he wanted

to know all about the Prince, who, through the whole of this tedious and parlous interlude, was standing at the man's elbow. But the train drew in, and drew out; and Louis and Thélin had taken their seats. They crossed the frontier, alighted at Brussels, and Louis Napoleon was out of the clutches of Louis Philippe. From Brussels they took train again to Ostend; and within four-and-twenty hours of the nervous dash from prison Louis was in England, and at the Brunswick Hotel, Jermyn Street, under the name of Count d'Arenenberg. "In the street he ran against his English friend and visitor at Ham, Lord Malmesbury. Malmesbury, that same night, met one of the attachés of the French Embassy at dinner. 'Have you seen him?' he asked. 'Who?' 'Louis Napoleon; he has just arrived in London.'"<sup>1</sup> The attaché left his dinner in a hurry, and ran to tell his chief.

But, through the hours since 7.15 or so on Monday morning, what of Dr. Conneau at Ham? It was his day of days for this quiet and discreet conspirator, and he rose above himself—not greatly to his liking. Till evening, or till late in the afternoon, Demarle must be kept from the Prince's room by a tale of his sudden sickness in the night. To the first message of Demarle, just after breakfast, Conneau returned an answer that the Prince had fallen into a heavy sleep. Then he set to work and made a dummy, and laid it in the Prince's bed. "At one Demarle returned. Conneau met him on the stairs. The Prince was easier but extremely tired; still, he would go and ask him if he would like to see the Governor. He went in and asked the dummy, and returned with the Prince's apologies; he was afraid he was still

<sup>1</sup> Cheetham,

too unwell to see anyone. The Governor retired, and did not return until a quarter past seven."<sup>1</sup> It was needless to prolong the comedy, for Conneau guessed that the Prince was now well beyond the frontier. The Governor was allowed to enter the room on tiptoes. He took the liberty of turning down the Prince's bedclothes; and at this point the curtain drops on the history of Louis Napoleon's escape. Madame Demarle, it is said, took the affair more to heart than her husband. What had induced the Prince to leave them so suddenly? Was it possible he had grown tired of her cooking?

The rest of the tale is familiar. In Ham he developed and perfected his conspirator's instinct, and the prison (which he afterwards called his University) was the vestibule of the Tuileries. From his escape in 1846 until the latter days of February, 1848, Louis Napoleon remained in London. Amid the stress of the revolution he was elected by four departments; in December, 1848, he was voted President by five and a half million votes—and from that date the conspirator's course was clear. He had never the least intention of resigning the power that universal suffrage had conferred on him, and the *coup d'état* aimed at Empire. The guerdon and crown of Empire came, perhaps, a little before his thoughts, and there was some very clever engineering in the business. Even at this day it is not to be said with certainty how far he had conspired to the end that he had dreamed of. A dozen histories are at variance.

The Empire, to which Louis Napoleon had accustomed the mind of France by astute gradations, was proclaimed in the closing days of December, 1852;

<sup>1</sup> Simpson.

and in January, 1853, the Emperor-adventurer had married in the eye of Europe the woman of his heart, a mere beauty of old Spain (who in her turn was to be a fugitive). Thus far victorious the second Man of Destiny had got.

VIII

PRISONER OF WAR IN TWO WORLDS

THE LOG OF A JACK TAR

*"I would give all my fame for a pot of ale and safety."*

"KING HENRY V."





## PRISONER OF WAR IN TWO WORLDS

### I

**T**HAT delightful old salt, James Choyce, master mariner, swinging idly at his moorings—which means, I take it, his arm-chair by the fire—rounds off the famous history of his life and adventures, and bursts into song :

“ Read this book and then you’ll know  
What adventures sailors undergo.  
By sea and land I’ve travell’d many miles,  
And visited many desolate isles—  
About whose shores seals and fishes roam,  
And legions of birds there find a home.  
Scenes like this I oft have seen,  
And many times among savages have been ;  
Where human flesh they do devour,  
But I am not now within their power.  
Though my timber’s sound, my spars are decayed,  
So to set much sail I am afraid,  
But as this port from rocks and sands seems clear,  
I now have cast my anchor here,  
In hopes my troubles now may cease,  
That here I may remain in peace,  
To sing or say I have safe got back,  
So pray remember honest Jack.”

This launched, he declines into prose :

“ I was brought up in the farming line at a place called Finchley. My father, dying, left a widow with seven children, of which I was the eldest but one, and as charity schools were not so plenty as

they have been since, I and my brothers and sisters had A B C for our education and the wide world for our inheritance.”

Having little taste for the plough, James, at sixteen, bound himself apprentice in the Southern Whale Fishery, and early in 1793 sailed from London in the ship *London*, Christopher Horner, master. Save for an escape from a French privateer (these were the days of the French Revolution) the voyage was uneventful, and in the autumn of 1795 Choyce was again in England. In December of the same year he embarked with Captain Horner in the *Lydia*, bound to the South Seas. After a trip of about thirteen months they were entrapped by the Spaniards at Payta, made prisoners of war, and sent up country. Here it is that the adventures of James Choyce in reality begin.

Tied on mules the prisoners journeyed inland, halting at Indian villages where the most part of the inhabitants had never before beheld an Englishman. In all this region of South America the natives “had heard such unaccountable stories about Englishmen, which their priests had confirmed and their superstition taught them to believe, that they thought we were not made like other people, and many of them expressed surprise, saying that although we were not Christians we looked the same as Christians.” Being Protestants they could nowhere get themselves ranked as Christians. They were “Jews,” “Turks,” “Infidels”; and one priest told them he had heard that they confessed to a hole bored in a tree. At one place the prisoners were thrust into “a small dungeon called a calaboose,” where they had to strip off their clothes to escape suffocation. At another they were regaled

at the house of the governor, who served them a dinner on silver dishes. Orders came to forward them to Lima; and due south they travelled, through rivers, over mountains and rocks, by wood and plain. Among the party was one Bell, whose tipsy freaks, whenever he could come at liquor, were so often expiated in the stocks that the progress of his comrades was sore delayed. Not till they had been three months on the road did the shipmates fetch their goal.

“We entered Lima by a long, populous street, chiefly inhabited by Indians and Sambos, who seemed to pity our condition; the women in particular came out from nearly every house with bread, cheese, fruit, meat, wine, etc. . . . After crossing the bridge we came into a large square, and were all drawn up in a line before the palace to await the viceroy’s pleasure.”

The viceroy remanded them to the Carcal Ciudad, or city jail, where they found the crew of another English ship, the *Betsy*. Two reals a day were given them for victuals, and to provide themselves with clothes the prisoners fell to making straw hats. The viceroy of Lima, “an old Irishman, between seventy and eighty years,” allowed the best of his prisoners the liberty of the town to sell their hats, and those who did not return at sunset found themselves in the stocks for a day or two.

At Lima, Choyce formed his first plan of escape; and towards midnight of the day selected he, with eight shipmates, set off for the coast, seized a fine twelve-oared boat, and made away in her. Water and provisions failed them before they had been long afloat; and on landing at a spot near a river they were perhaps fortunate in being taken by a

body of thirty or forty Spaniards. To Lima the adventurers were again despatched, and a new period of captivity began for them. It was two years since they had tramped the same road from Payta.

Once more the prisoners were set upon the march ; this time to Sierra de Pasco, a bustling city in the midst of silver mines. At this place Choyce attached himself to a party of eleven who had resolved to make their way back to Lima. Yet again, after an anxious flight of several days, they were captured ; but Choyce himself did eventually succeed in stealing through to Lima ; and from Lima made still another bid for liberty, enticing with him a few of his trustiest companions. But no star befriended these luckless mariners ; and on their new voyage they fell a prey to the brig *African* and were carried ashore.

“ As we paddled towards the shore I reflected upon the various adventures of a sailor’s life, and looking at my countrymen seated naked on these bundles of rushes, each with a black guide, I thought perhaps we may now be crossing the river Styx ; but seeing the surf rolling mountains high in front of me took all other thoughts out of my mind, and I only cared about getting safe to the beach, not regarding what might follow.”

Safe to the beach they got, and in his next prison, at Truxillo, Choyce’s earliest experience was an earthquake. “ We jumped up and got in the middle of the yard for fear the prison should fall on us, the Spaniards singing psalms as loud as they could bawl.” Within a fortnight “ we were started off for Lima again ” ; in nine days arrived there, “ and were at once put in the town jail.” By this

time Choyce seems to have settled down in the conviction that a burst for liberty was at least as good an occupation as working for his captors; so by and by we observe him quietly sawing through his window bars; and thereafter, with eighteen to bear him company, bidding farewell once more to prison, "in the hope never to see it again." But if in those latitudes at that era there was one valiant prison-breaker whose fate ordained his return to bondage, James Choyce was his name. Hiding in swamps, foraging in plantations at daybreak, pursued by horsemen, they were presently run to earth by dogs, and fell into the hands of negroes. "They tied our hands and drove us back to the plantation, where we were put in the stocks." The prison they had so lately quitted, "in the hope never to see it again," opened its doors anew to them; and the governor had before him a sorry and dejected parcel of travellers, "in the negroes' broad-brimmed hats and lousy blue shirts, as coarse as hop-sacks."

His worship "ordered us to be put in the calaboose, and the next morning we were put in chains two and two together, with a chain a fathom long with a ring in the middle, through which they rove another long chain called the *corriente*. Of these there were two, both made fast to the lower wall of the prison, and padlocked to a post in the guard-house. On these chains were strung together every night about a hundred and sixty thieves, murderers, and robbers of all colours, and outside the bars of the prison a guard of soldiers was always in readiness in the guard-house.

"These convicts were mostly employed in the King's storehouses from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon, when they had liberty to be

in the small yard till vespers, when we were ordered inside into this den of filth, misery, and wickedness, where the noise made by reeving the *corriente* through the big chains was enough to stun one. Thus we were all safely moored in four tiers for the night, and in the morning there was the same din in unreeving the *corriente*. Before we had been there long some of us caught fever and were sent to the hospital, where we were somewhat better off, for we were put in single chains, so no one could move about without dragging one's mate with him. There was a *corriente* in the hospital also at the foot of the beds, and all the unhappy patients were chained to it in the same manner as in the calaboose."

After two months in this limbo light dawned again upon the captives. They learned that many of the English prisoners were receiving passports from the Spaniards, and dollars for their passage to Panama, whence they might ship to England. The "old Irish viceroy" of Lima harangued them on this subject, and after his oration "we were taken before the secretary and had to make an oath not to fight against Spain during this present war." This done, "we were told if we were taken in any armed vessel we should be treated as pirates, and then, giving us seventeen dollars apiece, they sent us to Santa Catalina, where some of our countrymen still remained."

In the spring of 1800 Choyce set foot in Valparaiso. Adventure now succeeds adventure. Choyce was fixed in his resolve to get to England. He shipped on a Spanish vessel loading wheat for Lima, and went in her to Callao. Here he seems to have commanded a leaky old craft which, in his breezy style, he christened the *Lucky Escape*; and away with



. . . . and the governor had before him a sorry and dejected parcel  
of travellers.





her he goes—though in what direction one does not clearly understand. Somewhere on the passage the fellow-travellers over whom he has a nominal authority tell him that if land is not made in three days he will be thrown overboard ; but before this crisis is well past he has the fortune to be run down by the English ship *Henry*, whose captain takes him “ as a lawful prize for the benefit of all concerned.” The *Henry*, in turn, has to lower her colours to the Spanish *Castor*; and to Choyce, at any rate, the clasp of the irons (“ we were clapped in irons ”) was familiar.

“ After we had been a few days on board, the Irish lieutenant came on board the hulk and asked if any of us boys had a mind to enter on board the *Castor*. As this seemed the only way to get another chance for liberty I said I would make one.”

But he had no intention of sailing, and took the first opportunity of deserting. We follow him next to the plantation of one Gallagher, a friendly Irishman, who had offered temporary shelter, and behold him planting cotton under a negro overseer. Here, with a fellow-refugee from the *Castor*, Gardiner, he was soon in the grip of ague ; and, being free to leave when he pleased, started to drag himself and his companion out of the pestilential bush.

“ About noon my companion began to flag, being worn down to a mere skeleton, and soon after he was seized with a shivering fit of ague and laid down under the shade of a tree while I sat by him not knowing how soon I might be in the same case. The mosquitoes finding us out, I got a branch of a tree to drive these little torments away, and I began to think whether, as some say, the all-wise Creator has preordained the destiny of man, if He had

created me in order to endure all these troubles, while there are some in the world who do not suffer so many hardships in their whole life as I have often endured in one day."

But through these sufferings also the mariner was brought; and in January, 1801, we encounter him in Panama, with his passport sewn into the crown of his old straw hat. The holders of passports were allowed to leave only in certain vessels, but Choyce secured a passage in a pilot brig, "and in two days arrived at Cartagena, where we were confined in the citadel in company with three or four hundred more Englishmen who had been captured in various ships." Here the fortunes of Choyce underwent a sudden and dramatic change. He was put on board a cutter which took him to Port Royal, Jamaica; and from Port Royal he was sent to the *Melampus* frigate of forty-four guns. "I now found myself," says James, not too cheerfully, "once more under the British flag, and also under the lash of the boatswain's cat." He had, in fact, been pressed on board the frigate, while, as the holder of a passport from the Spaniards, he was pledged not to fight against them. Regarding himself, therefore, as the prisoner of his own countrymen, he made up his mind to quit them as soon as possible—and at Vera Cruz he did so. Sent on shore in the yawl, he gave his midshipman the slip, climbed into a tree, and descending from it at nightfall, made his way to a house near by, where he told his Spanish hosts that he had left his ship because his countrymen were "no Christians."

The man of the house, congratulating him on his escape from the heretics, directed the wanderer to a plantation about a league distant, where for five days

he lay concealed. A week or so later he shipped on the *Lanzerote*, bound to Cadiz ; and in her, February, 1802, sailed from Vera Cruz with a cargo of indigo and cochineal. He reached port at Cadiz in the latter end of April. In the middle of June he obtained a berth "on board the ship *Mary Ann* of Pool, Samuel Wood, master, and by the end of the month arrived in London, after having been absent six and a half years ; but finding all my relations dead, I might say :

‘I at length in England landed,  
And left the roaring main,  
But found all relations stranded,  
So I off to sea again.’ ”

## II

In the summer of 1802 Choyce sailed in the ship *Diana* on a whaling voyage to the South Atlantic.

“ In December, 1803, we touched at St. Helena, and there we heard the unwelcome news that war had broken out again between France and England. Leaving St. Helena we touched at Ascension, where we caught some turtle and then steered for England. On the 26th of February we encountered a heavy gale, and carried away our bowsprit, and owing to this loss we were captured on the 4th of March in latitude 48° N. and longitude 12° W., by the *Blonde*, a privateer belonging to Bordeaux.

“ This was the beginning of all my worst troubles, and I often thought of what Captain Silvester had told me on my leaving the *San Pedro* at Valparaiso, every word of which seemed likely to come true, for I had been on board of a British man-of-war, and was now going to a French prison.”

Some seven other vessels became the booty of the adventurous *Blonde*, and towards the end of the month James was, with two hundred other prisoners, in the hold of a small schooner, "with the hatches on." At St. Juan de Luz, the French town nearest to the Spanish frontier, they were taken out half dead, and lodged in the fort till morning; then, handcuffed and tied together with cords, were put on the road for Bayonne, where they arrived the same evening. At Bayonne the prisoners were registered, and James gave himself out a Spaniard, for, says he, "I knew that any name was better than an English one."

From Bayonne to Pau, Tarbes, and Mèran; and the mariner began to think that it was time to cut his lucky. With two Jersey men he laid a simple plan.

"The day we left Mèran it was very wet, and after we had gone about five leagues the road led by the side of a wood, so we all three made a bold attempt for liberty by jumping over a deep ditch and getting into the wood, but not without being seen by some of the soldiers, who pursued us, but as it was raining very fast and the bushes were very wet they soon gave up the chase. We lay close in the wood until near four o'clock, and then set out in the direction of the Pyrenees, keeping on all night and shunning the high roads as much as possible."

By hazard the fugitives learned that the peasants of the countryside were not unsympathetic towards deserters from Napoleon's army, and this character in consequence they assumed. Their design was to cross the Pyrenees, and a friendly weaver by whom they had been fed and harboured guided them at night to a sheltered path. On the summit of the

mountains they nearly foundered in the snow. So intense was the cold at this altitude that they did not dare to wait for darkness, and began in full daylight their descent of the stair-like path. At a hamlet on the mountain side the trio were accosted in Spanish, and this heartened them not a little, for they knew that they must now be passing rapidly out of the enemy's land. "At last we were told that St. John's [in Catalonia] was but two leagues away, and that there was only one more village in French territory. This welcome news made us put our best foot foremost, and hurry along in the hope to get out of France before nightfall."

Just then came along a man in a cocked hat, and on the hat a button, and on the button the legend "Douane." Custom-house! Nervously the run-aways saluted him, wondering whether they could clear the village before the Customs man gave the alarm. St. John's, or San Juan, lay so near!

"He followed after us, keeping us well in sight, and as we got near the end of the village we saw that we had to pass through a gate, as there was a high wall across the valley from one side to the other. Knowing how critical our position was we made a run and actually got through the gate, but at that moment nine or ten men came out from the guard-house hard by, with muskets in their hands, and said they would shoot us unless we stopped, so we were obliged to submit. Here ended our delusive hopes of liberty."

Their new captors were not long in discovering that James and the Jerseymen had no passports. Worse, there was found among them an English check shirt. Hereupon they were taxed with being English spies. At this they gave in. They were

English prisoners of war, they said, who had been taken by the *Blonde*, and had escaped from their convoy near Mèran.

From this village in sight of Catalonia the footsore three, with a chain padlocked round their necks, had to trudge it back to Tarbes. Here they were riveted to three others of the same feather ; and the six, struggling along under buffets by day, and at night thrown into some verminous cell on their line of march (dragging with them a comrade sick of fever), were driven presently to Limoges.

At Limoges, or soon after leaving it, Choyce himself caught fever and was three weeks in hospital. He was well looked after, he says, " by the sisters who did the nursing. These *sœurs*, or sisters, I was told, had been nuns at the time of the Revolution, and attended in the hospital without pay or reward." From Limoges to Orleans, and thence to the famous war prison at Verdun.

As the gang of prisoners approached this place Choyce was amazed to see the roads thronged with English people of fashion, on foot, on horseback, and in carriages : half London, it seemed to him, had come to Verdun ; and in the town itself " as complete dandies as one would see in Bond Street or the piazzas of Covent Garden." He was told that " they were some of those who had come to France before the war, some to spend their own money and some, no doubt, that of their creditors ; and that when war broke out Bonaparte had laid an embargo on them all, and sent them to Verdun as prisoners of war. They were only allowed to leave the town when given a passport by the general ; and that all those that we had seen were going to some races about five or six miles away which were

much patronised by Lord Yarmouth and many of his friends.”

The dandies had perhaps indifferent luck on the race-course, for in the alms-stocking that Choyce and the others hung out on a gate of their prison they collected “from those benevolent English gentlemen the enormous sum of eleven sous, or fivepence-halfpenny English.”

In the barracks to which Choyce was transferred he found several masters of English merchant ships, who, liberated on parole, were eking out their allowance from the French Government in the callings of stablemen, shoeblacks, coach-washers, and servants of the English “Nabobs.” He was moved on to the new depot of Sarre Libre; having now, he tells us, journeyed on foot in France a thousand and eighty-nine miles on a diet of bread and water.

In the state of misery to which the prisoners of Sarre Libre were reduced—hungry and half naked—despairing of peace, despairing of exchange, many of them, Choyce among the number, volunteered into the French service. Choyce, consenting to enter their navy, was sent to L’Orient.

“I left Sarre Libre one cold snowy day,  
And for L’Orient I bent my way,  
In hopes once more my liberty to gain  
By forsaking of the British name.

. . . . .

But if I get clear, which I hope I will,  
A Briton I am and shall be still,  
Though to my country I am now opposed  
I’ll always face old England’s foes.”

The volunteer was used on the road like a common rogue. “After many sufferings and much ill-usage,

I arrived at L'Orient, my long-looked-for haven of rest, after having marched, chained like a dog or felon, seven hundred and eight miles, and being thirty-eight days on the road and sixty-three confined in various prisons."

At L'Orient, without ceremony, he was bundled on to the 74-gun ship *D'Hautpoult*, among whose crew were Danes, Swedes, Prussians, and Americans. The port was blockaded by English ships of war, and Choyce clung to hope. Napoleon was to visit the ships and fortifications along the coast; "and in order the better to clean and paint the ships it was ordered that their crews should live ashore in tents made of sails."

Choyce in this situation did not miss his opportunity; and opportunity prevailed. He noticed that the fishermen on the coast went crab-hunting in slender mud-boats, and that the boats were left among bushes on an island. In one of these crazy little things, with a countryman, Watts, for his second in command, he escaped on a short night of summer, 1808. Strength was failing the two paddlers when, in a hazy dawn, they were sighted by the British *Theseus*, of 74 guns.

"Our vessel was hoisted in; the bottoms made two mess-tables for the lower deck, and the remainder was given to the cook to put in the copper fire. Thus ended my troubles and adventures in France."



## IX

### FROM THE VENGEANCE OF ROBESPIERRE

#### THE LAST AVATAR OF "FAUBLAS"

"*Escape for thy life.*"—GENESIS XIX. 17.

"*The Guillotine goes not ill, 'Guillotine ne va pas mal.'*"—CARLYLE.

"*You know the France that men call gay,  
The 'Entente Cordiale' France, you know.*"—"PUNCH."



## FROM THE VENGEANCE OF ROBESPIERRE

### I

ON the 24th of June, 1793, a man and a woman were in flight from Paris. From Paris they were in flight, and from the guillotine. The man was outlawed; and the woman's fate, were they taken, was not less certain than his.

Three weeks earlier, Sunday, June 2nd, the six weeks' death-wrestle of the party of the Mountain and the party of the Gironde had ended in the triumph of the Mountain: the Girondist Deputies, swept down, proscribed, were expelled from the Convention. Some of them as yet lay hidden in Paris, others had fled to Normandy. All their heads were greatly desired by Robespierre.

No Girondist head did Robespierre covet more than that of Jean Baptiste Louvet, his personal foe; Jean Baptiste who had had the temerity to attempt his impeachment. And Jean Baptiste at this moment was faring secretly but quietly out of Paris; his dear and devoted Lodoïska beside him. No pair needs this day a safer road out of Paris.

Louvet at this date was a few days over thirty-three. On the occasion of his first notable appearance in the Convention, ladies in the gallery had craned their necks for a peep at him. All of them had read his famous romance of "Faublas": a

top-shelf romance, perhaps (though such by no means in the eighteenth century), but a wonderful and penetrating affair, not in the least meriting Carlyle's contemptuous description. In Louvet, as he stepped to the bar of the Assembly, the ladies in the gallery thought to get a glimpse of Faublas himself, the brilliant hero of those curious and amorous escapades. What they beheld was a little lean, pale-faced man, of a rather stern aspect, decidedly bald, nothing of remark about him save his fine magnetic eyes. Novelist, dramatist, journalist, pamphleteer, orator, and a leader among men whose political talents were considerable, Louvet had preserved both a clear mind and a clean heart in those crises of the French Revolution through which, without a trace of fear, he had already passed; and at any season, in urging what he believed to be the claims of justice and humanity, he would brave the wrath of foe and friend alike. There is something appealing, something to trust, in the one acceptable portrait that we have of him.

Lodoïska he had named after a heroine of "Faublas." From his delicate childhood he had enveloped her in a passionate and worshipping affection. Her parents had married Lodoïska at sixteen to one Cholet, a wealthy jeweller of the Palais Royal, but she had followed with a love as constant as his the variegated fortunes of Jean Baptiste. Escaping Cholet (by process of divorce) at the end of 1792, she was about to wed her lover.

Meanwhile, on a summer's day, in a hired vehicle of some sort, they were fleeing Paris, and Robespierre—and the "national razor."

## II

At Meulan, where they had to take another carriage, their new Jehu was a furious disciple of Marat, who never ceased to denounce "these villainous Deputies who want to set fire to the Departments." At Evreux next morning they met a brother outlaw, the eloquent young barrister Guadet, gaunt and footsore after tramping nearly fifty miles in a day. Guadet urged the perils of the road, which he said no woman ought to share with them; and Louvet by and by added his voice reluctantly to his friend's, imploring Lodoïska to return to Paris. Weeping, she consented. When she had set out alone, Louvet repented that he had let her go; and in his "Mémoires" he exclaims: "Had I brought her on the way, we should now perhaps be in America."

Guadet and Louvet reached Caen on the 26th. Everything here was in brisk insurrectionary movement; volunteers enrolling in an army that should march on Paris. At Caen were other outlawed Girondists—among them, Buzot, Salle, Gorzas, Pé-tion, and the handsome Barbaroux, who had found time to fall in love with a pretty Marquise.

By the Council-General of the Department a lodging was assigned to the Girondists in what had been the Hôtel de l'Intendance; a comely old balconied mansion with an extraordinary roof, up-standing at this day. Immediately opposite was the house of a certain Mme. de Brètheville, with whom was living a gracious and beautiful young woman whose memorable, brief history has echoed round the world.

Accompanied by an old man-servant she called

one morning at the Hôtel de l'Intendance and requested to see Barbaroux. Her name? The young lady gave the name of Charlotte Corday. She wanted possession, she said, of some papers in the keeping of the Minister of the Interior in Paris. Enough for us that from Caen, furnished with Barbaroux's introduction, Charlotte Corday started for the capital on the errand wherein two lives were presently extinguished: the squalid Marat's by Charlotte Corday, and Charlotte Corday's by the executioner Sanson.

The Girondist dream of a rising of the Departments against Paris was very quickly dissolved; and now Louvet and his friends were contemplating another run for safety. Tidings oozed from Paris that the victorious Mountain was making fresh arrests there; and Louvet, knowing how agreeable it was to Robespierre to strike an enemy through a woman whom he loved, suffered torments of anxiety for Lodoïska. He was marching concealed in the friendly ranks of the Breton volunteers (the first stage of his second flight); had got as far as Vire; and, weary as could be, had gone to bed at six o'clock. At midnight a servant called him. "A lady downstairs was asking for him." "*C'était elle!*" It was she, Lodoïska. Louvet is fond of admitting the reader to his transports of soul, but over this reunion he passes with a single cry of joy. At Caen they were married.

The bride was for seeking shelter in America. Louvet said he could not yet desert the cause; and towards Bordeaux they pressed, Lodoïska in a carriage with other ladies in advance of the Finistère battalion. At Dôl they had to charge into the town; at Dinan they enjoyed a brief welcome. Here they separated from the volunteers; and nine-

teen of the Gironde, variously armed, with six picked men of the battalion as guides, started across country to Quimper. We have glimpses of them supping in haste at a solitary farm, where the board has been spread by a timid host who does not show himself; sitting hungry by the road while a scout seeks provender; wet to the skin under scourging rains; surprised in a barn at 2 a.m. by a company of National Guards; singing the *Carmagnole* on the march, to deceive the countryside; halting for a Barbaroux with sprained ankle, a Cussy in the torments of gout, a Riouffe who must remove his boots for a while, his feet soaked in blood. Thus they toiled, mile after mile. They got at last to Quimper.

A mile away Lodoïska had found a pretty cottage, and thither stole the bridegroom for the briefest interlude of love. All this region was beset with perils, and in a space of days Louvet was again flying from the emissaries of the Mountain. Lodoïska must to Paris once more; there to gather, were it possible, the remnant of their slender fortune: at Bordeaux, perchance, they might wind up the honeymoon.

For the friendly owners of the ship *Industrie*, scorning hazards, were prepared to carry to Bordeaux such Girondist Deputies as lay concealed in and about the skirts of Quimper. Of these we observe Louvet taking horse one evening for a thirty-mile ride to the coast. How did Louvet, who had probably never before set foot in stirrup, compass ten leagues in the dark on horseback? In these adventures for life the adventurer seems to rise, and with the barest effort, clean above himself. He delves, burrows, climbs, swims, suffers heat and cold,

lives upon air, walks or rides or sails without compass, becomes invisible and intangible, does what no man can do except a fairy-man of Boiardo or Ariosto—and does it naturally, and in the way of genius. Louvet and his horse, strangers till that strange evening, found or felt their way to the trysting-place some minutes before midnight. The others of the small party who were to take ship in the *Industrie* received them there.

By midnight at latest they should have been on board, for the *Industrie* made one of a convoy; but no *Industrie* was in sight, and at one in the morning, in a smack they had laid hands on, the fugitives were stealthily seeking her up and down the Brest roads. She was caught towards eight in the morning; and the old Scottish skipper, who for hours had been tacking to and fro, fretting and fuming, hoisted his passengers on deck, and raced after the convoy. In the lull of a storm the brig doubled the headland of La Coubre, entered the Gironde, saw the hills of Médoc and the glistening cliffs of Saintonge, and through the reeds and swamps of the Bec d'Ambès Louvet and his companions waded into the haven of their hopes. What a haven! Their foes of the Mountain had outstepped them; the Gironde was athirst for the blood of the Girondists.

### III

Yes, in Bordeaux itself Terror was now “the order of the day.” At the Bec d'Ambès Guadet's father-in-law, the banker, Dupeyrat, had a small estate; and in the banker's absence Guadet locked his companions in the house, and betook himself to Saint-Émilion, his birthplace, where he thought



to find them some safer refuge. "For a long time," says M. Lenotre,<sup>1</sup> "he wandered round his family home, situated outside the walls of the town, amid vines, on the Coutras road. At midnight he crept into his father's house, threw himself at his feet, and begged him to give shelter to his companions. The old man, much agitated, consented to receive his son and one of his friends, but not more, having no 'hiding-place' where he could lodge the others." From house to house, to thirty houses in all, Guadet trudged, imploring succour. But the Terror was abroad. Against the victims of the Mountain all prudent doors were sealed.

Hourly at the Bec d'Ambès, meanwhile, the plight of the prisoners in the banker's house grew deadlier. On the night of the 27th of September a breathless messenger cast in at the window the warning that the village was rapidly filling with soldiers. Not another moment to spare, and in the dark, they crept from the house against which, ten minutes later, soldiers were pointing two pieces of artillery.

Next night the wanderers found themselves at Libourne, where they must somehow cross the Dordogne. At the landing-stage they stumbled on a sentry fast asleep at his post; and while some went to beat up the ferryman, the rest crouched at a little distance from the soldier, intently watching his slumbers. Forty-five minutes passed; the ferryman was discovered, the farther shore was reached; and the sentry slumbered on.

And now for two weeks the wretched Girondists went to and fro, hardly knowing from one day to another in what direction their steps were bent. "Like outlawed or excommunicated persons in the

<sup>1</sup> "Romances of the French Revolution," vol. ii.

Middle Ages, they found all doors closed against them. Like wolves they prowled from Pomerol to Saint-Genez, from Montpeyrroux to Castillon, sleeping in the vineyards, the woods or the quarries. Their presence in the country was known, and their presence was shunned as though they were savage beasts ; they carried ' the contagion of anguish,' and their appearance alone sufficed to frighten the peasants. . . . Those were the days of the Great Terror."<sup>1</sup>

A brave woman living at Fontainebleau heard of these sufferers, and straightway resolved to befriend them. This was Madame Bouquey, daughter of old Dupeyrat, Guadet's father-in-law. The old gentleman (he was nearly eighty years of age) had written his daughter an account of the pains of Louvet and his fellow Girondins. He told "how they were being tracked like wolves from lair to lair ; how they were without guides, often without food, without hope in the world ; and how with bleeding feet they dragged themselves from friend to friend, begging for shelter, only to find all doors shut in their faces."<sup>2</sup>

Bidding good-bye to her husband (he had been *procureur du roi* at Saint-Émilion), Thérèse Bouquey forthwith took *diligence*, and, at the speed of that conveyance, journeyed to Saint-Émilion, where she had a country house. Within a few hours of her arrival she found means, says Lenotre, "to let Salles and Guadet know that her house was open to them. They came, but not without some compunction, for Barbaroux, Louvet, and Valady had no place of refuge. 'Let them all three come,' said

<sup>1</sup> Lenotre.

<sup>2</sup> John Rivers, "Louvet, Revolutionist and Romance-Writer."

the brave woman. The following night the three outlaws arrived, tired out, their clothes exhausted. They reported that Buzot and Pétion had been obliged to change their hiding-place nine times in fifteen days, and that they were reduced to the last extremity. 'Let them come, too,' said Mme. Bouquey, but she advised that they be warned not to come in the daytime. At midnight—it was October 12th, 1793—the seven fugitives were assembled in her house. She wept for joy at seeing this disconsolate band—'her brood of children'—and, quite happy, she regaled with a copious supper these fierce men, who for weeks past had never met with a basin of hot broth or a welcome smile."

Saint-Émilion town scatters itself over a wide hill, and at the summit stands the Bouquey house where "Marinette," as she was fondly called, played the angel to her forlorn ones. "Nothing is changed. The old panes are still in the windows, the doors are of thick oak, the locks have their old keys—those keys which used to dangle in a bunch at Marinette's apron."

A famous place it was for concealment. Saint-Émilion's hill is pierced throughout with huge caves and galleries, in immediate communication with which was Mme. Bouquey's house. "There are two ways of descending into the caverns. The first and easiest method is by ladder down a disused water chute; but the outlaws were seldom able to avail themselves of this means, as the descent is exposed to observation from the windows of the adjoining houses. The second method was that which the fugitives generally employed, and a very perilous method it was.

"In the garden opposite the kitchen window is

a square well a hundred feet deep, and in the masonry of two of the opposite sides a series of superimposed holes have been cut, about two feet apart. These rude steps are always wet and slippery; but by carefully moving the feet from niche to niche, and supporting themselves by the hands against the sides of the well, the outlaws were able to descend to a depth of twenty feet below the surface, where there is a large recess opening into a spacious cavern, which is, in turn, undermined by a deeper cave, reached by slipping through a hole. The visitor's blood runs cold at the very idea of this gymnastic feat, which the unhappy men were reduced to performing every day."<sup>1</sup>

But '93 was growing wintry, and Louvet could not for long endure the icy air of citoyenne Bouquey's "grotto." She guarded him whenever possible in her own house, whence, at danger signal, he would have to dislodge himself and sink below ground. Terrible were the shifts to which the bright, devoted woman was put to feed her hungry covey, and many a day must she herself have gone with scarce a bite; but, says Louvet, "She sat in our midst like a mother surrounded by her children, for whom it was a joy to sacrifice herself."

There, then, not without alarums, but in happier case than aforetime, the escaped of the Convention lay until the night of November 13th. That evening, mounting for supper, they found Marinette in tears. It was known, or, if not, was about to be known, that the Girondins were in cover at Saint-Émilion. Vengeance threatened in the town, Louvet and his friends were not the men to imperil their heroic little "mother"; and even before she had sobbed

<sup>1</sup> Rivers.

out her story they were up and bidding her farewell. That same night, winter in the black sky above them, they plunged anew into the France of the "Great Terror."<sup>1</sup>

## IV

The dance of life and death strikes up again. At a cross-roads, an hour or so beyond midnight, Louvet, Guadet, and Salles parted company with Valady, who, soon after leaving them, was haled to the guillotine from the threshold of a relative. Louvet, with Guadet and Salles, passed the day in a quarry, marching the next night through a whipping rain till they came to a house where Guadet had, as he fancied, a friend. The friend denied them her door, denied them "a little vinegar and a glass of water" for Louvet, who had dropped in a faint on the road. Roused from his stupor, Louvet, a sudden vision of Lodoïska animating him, took another resolution. Friendships of all kinds had failed these pilgrims of the Terror; friend was but bringing friend into deeper danger: Louvet would make for Paris and Lodoïska alone. "I know," he says, in a curious passage, "that I have but a slender chance of getting there, but my duty is to attempt it." They divided the little paper money that was left to them, and Louvet addressed himself to the night.

With limbs benumbed he dragged himself into Montpont at sunrise. A sentinel was propped

<sup>1</sup> The splendid little woman, Thérèse Bouquey, thirty-one years of age, an almost unknown heroine of the Revolution, died on the scaffold in the summer of the following year. Consummate to the end in self-sacrifice, she begged leave to be the last to ascend the platform, that her husband might not look upon the blood of his wife. Bordeaux has its monument "To the Memory of the Girondins." There is none to the memory of Marinette.

against a wall, and Louvet fumbled for his forged passport. He held his breath, nearing the sentinel, but the sentinel did not move. Louvet got abreast of him, and stopped. The man was as dead in sleep as the guard at the ferry of Libourne, and Louvet stepped across his musket and walked on into the town. When parting from his friends he had put off all clothing that could be dispensed with, and was now disguised in *redingote nationale* and "a little Jacobin peruke" which he had held in reserve. His courage and resolution, he would have us know, were at their highest: "a man at grips with fortune, alone amid a world of enemies." What troubled him the most was weariness of limb, and a fiery rheumatism tormented his left ankle.

Over the charcoal in his room at the first inn chanced upon he began to tinker at his passport: a surprising document on which four or five pens had previously worked, certifying that the *brave sansculotte* "Larcher" was proceeding honourably to Paris. Louvet's own pen made the document just good enough to pass him through the villages, but for towns it was valueless. No matter; towns must be shunned.

At three in the afternoon, warmed, and with food in him, he pushed on to Mussidan, hoping to reach before nightfall a hamlet on the outskirts of the town. But here the country road was deep in mud, and there overlaid with sharp stones; his left leg swelled and burned, and at intervals of five minutes he had to pause and lean upon his stick. Night was at hand, and Mussidan not yet in sight.

Here, however, was a providential ale-house, with a kindly host and his kindly wife; and under this he stayed and rested two whole days. On the

bitter road once more, the pains in his leg increased, the fire mounted to his thigh : the bold man’s heart began to fail him. “What shall I do !” he cried. “What shall I do ! A mile or two a day—what hope for me ? I shall be two months on the road—how can I avoid discovery ? ”

But he passed in safety through Mussidan, and at the first village beyond it made his way to the inn, where he was nearly trapped. A sly hostess, posing as royalist, plied him with questions. Wasn’t Charlotte Corday fine ? What a scoundrel that Marat ! What did the gentleman think of the guillotining of all these noblemen and priests and merchants ? Louvet, for his part, played the ferocious Jacobin. “I threatened her with nothing less than the guillotine—but it didn’t altogether take ” ; and that night he was careful to put his weapons under the pillow. At nine next morning the landlady roused him to ask if he were for the road. “I told her she had made me so comfortable that I was much disposed to dine with her. It was no fault of hers that I ever dined again.”

For the woman presently fetched in a bumpkin whom she introduced as “our Mayor,” and the Mayor would like to see the honest gentleman’s passport. Louvet at once produced that amazing instrument of travel, and was little displeased to observe that his worship could barely read. Louvet called for wine, and launched upon an anecdote ; he told a story not less delightfully than he wrote one. The Citizen Mayor liked the wine and the anecdote, and the vicious landlady saw her guest slipping through her fingers. “I’ll go fetch the Citizen Procureur Syndic,” said she. “He can read all the writing that ever was wrote.” In came

the Citizen Procureur Syndic. He also was willing to push the bottle about, and laughed and vowed he had never heard such stories as the gentleman's. The passport was forgotten. Like Rabelais's Bishop Homenas, listening to praise of the "sacrosanct Decretals," Louvet called for more wine, and more. The landlady, despairing of her reward for the betrayal, summoned a Citizen Municipal Officer. He proved as gifted a toper and cheerful a listener as the mayor and the syndic; and all afternoon the frowsy inn kept carnival. Louvet, in fine, caroused the trio till they could have sworn to forty signatures on the passport (which was never again demanded), and, hastily settling his score, got clear of the death-trap.

A day followed bare of all accident: itself an accident of note in Louvet's progress! On the morrow, shunning Périgueux, where danger lay, he took the road to Limoges, and came, when night had well fallen—wary as ever—to the hamlet of Les Tavernes. The landlord was preparing for bed. "Passport, citizen?" said he. "Ah! from Limourne, I see; but you've passed Périgueux without giving the magistrates a call. Well, you'll have to go back there to-morrow." The jaded traveller pleaded his condition; and a jolly-looking carrier, finishing his supper, threw in a word for him. "Seems to me," said he to the surly Boniface, "if you'm a-goin' to be allays a-plaguin' travellers this a-way, you'll make 'em that sick o' travellin' that they 'ont travel at all no more. W'at follers? This 'ere: you'll go an' you'll a-ruin innkeepers, an' trade, an' France, an' carriers. Now, I ast you, mister——" "He'll have to go back, anyhow," said Boniface; and farther to mark his disapproval



of a customer so lax in matter of passports, he laid him a supper of dry bread and a mug of sour wine. "Ugh!" said the jolly carrier, and passed across the greasy table to Louvet the remains of his own pullet. "Stow that away, mister, an' damn the feller's swipes, I say!"

"And so," observes Louvet, "we got in talk." The honest carrier, manifestly not the warmest friend of government by Terror, had goods to deliver at Limoges next day; and Louvet should take a jaunt there in his cart.

But Louvet spent a miserable night on a miserable bed (all rural inns in France at this date were pitiful beyond description); and, falling at daybreak from one sickly doze into another, awoke to find that the carrier had harnessed and was off. Setting forth on foot he saw the landlord mounting his nag. "*Bon voyage!*" said the landlord sarcastically. "I'm off to Périgueux."

To Périgueux? He must be going there to denounce the outlawed Louvet! So, of every pedestrian he encountered, the outlawed Louvet asked: "Tell me, citizen, have you seen a man in a grey cloak on a black horse?"

Presently he overtook the carrier, whose multifarious errands, from door to door, speeded him indifferently. That wintry morning the sick, dejected Louvet, ever dragging his swollen leg, saw an enemy in every living creature. He grew suddenly suspicious of his friend of overnight. But the jolly carrier laughed away suspicions. Louvet must get into the cart at once; he was not fit to walk; and into the cart he clambered. While they jogged the carrier turned about and gave his passenger a broad stare. "W'at I says, I says," said he. "I

said it afore, and I says it ag'in. You bain't no thief."

This oblique testimonial took poor Louvet slightly aback. It was the sole compliment the jolly carrier vouchsafed him, and at frequent intervals he repeated it. The simple, good man was seemingly unable to conceive of any mortal foe save and except a thief. Soon, from his copious gossip, the fact detached itself that the landlord had suspected Louvet of thievery and prowlerly. Not as Royalist, therefore, but as thief and footpad had he gone to Périgueux to inform against him. "But there—you bain't no thief."

Louvet in hearty terms protested that, on the contrary, he did not like thieves in the very least. "Why," continued he, without a blush, "they drove me out of business in Bordeaux!" "See there! Druv y' outer business in Bordeaux. Blast 'em! An' meself, same as I'm a-setting 'ere, I knaws a thing er two consarnin' they sort. Took an' stole a 'orse off o' me! Took an' stole me 'orse, they did; and used 'im that sinful as the pore delooded critter give over an' died. Stood me in a matter o' twenty pun, did that 'orse. But *you* ain't no thief! You jog along o' me. Thar bain't a one in these contaigious pairts but knaws me, an' I knaws 'im, an' I says to 'em youm bain't wunner these yere thieves." <sup>1</sup>

The jolly carrier and his wayworn fare were now wholly of a mind; and in the respectability of the one the other basked luxuriously, sitting up serenely in the cart, his lame leg swathed in the horse-cloth, nodding and smiling at the countryfolk on the

<sup>1</sup> In Louvet's French the carrier talks dialect. I have broadened it a little.

sodden road, and only now and again burying himself under the ragged tarpaulin.

In one unguarded moment Louvet was very near destruction. The cart was jolting into the dirty little town of Aixe-sur-Vienne, four miles or so from Limoges. “There bain’t no guard at Aixe,” said the carrier (adding that Louvet was no thief). “Sit where you be”; and Louvet kept his perch in the forepart of the little van. But at Aixe they had recently established a guard-house, and a shaveling sentry, with shaveling recruits eyeing him on the other side of the road, called for the passport. Louvet had grown wise enough to refuse nothing to necessity, but he was getting desperately bored with passports, and the carrier was a safe escort. “Passport!” he bawled, flinging up his lame leg; “there’s your passport! Go and get one like it, you lazy young devil, you! Wounded—can’t you see?—wounded in La Vendée. Go and get your own silly leg smashed there, and if that doesn’t passport you to the other side of nowhere, I’m a negro! And now I’m off.” So was the carrier. Whipping up his horse in pretended rage (“the first time,” says Louvet, “he had even grazed him with the whip”), the jolly carrier went hurry-scurry through Aixe.

Limoges. At Limoges, as the good carrier divined (though all this while the trustful man was ignorant of his wayfarer’s identity), it would be unsafe for Louvet to descend at any decent inn; so to his own house he carried him. Here the Girondin stayed three days, quitting his bed only to bathe the swollen leg. Late the third day the carrier came home with joyful countenance. He had found another carrier, even a bosom friend, who would see Louvet safe to Paris. This other carrier had

been privily informed that the lame gentleman (no thief!) was "contraband": didn't mind that nohow; and was one that could keep his mouth tight. Thus had fortune opened one more door to Louvet.

Before two on the following morning my true-hearted host had him out of bed; his own kind hands had got breakfast ready: a flagon of wine, a savoury mess of chitterlings (*andouille*), a pot of coffee. And now, as the hour of parting neared, the jovial carrier was quite disordered; tears fell from him, and Louvet's mingled in the flow. Then in the dark the pair set out (the wife, a nervous little body, had been afraid to sleep at home that night), and the carrier led his unknown friend by dim, secure ways to an inn a mile or so beyond Limoges. Here, surely enough, was the new conductor habited for the Paris road; and here, therefore, with tears renewed, Louvet bade farewell to the best of carriers.

The wain for Paris was a huge, lumbering concern, canopied, with ample space for human freight and merchandise; and Louvet sighed, as he reflected that the speed of this ark would breed no dangers. And now picture the scene as the sturdy carrier, waving his lantern, went to and fro on this forlorn winter's morning, and his passengers—chance-met, shivering, and grumbling—assembled for the journey. Apprehensively enough did the Girondin, holding back a little, peer at them. Seven he counted, men and women; sworn Jacobins all (this much he seems to have known); and somewhat quick in quarrel. Yet, for all anxiety of heart, he was grateful to these folk; and assuredly the seven hasty Jacobins were seven not uncharitable souls, since they were already in a conspiracy to shield

him by the way. Thereby, moreover, the risk that the Jacobins incurred was supreme. That the little lame pale-faced man was one of the proscribed Girondins they did not know, of course ; but they knew that for some cause he was travelling *incognito* ; and under the Terror the guillotine fell alike on suspects and shelterers of suspects.

But fate had wound Louvet up for the fresh adventure. On the second day's travel he had all the seven Jacobins in love with him, men and women. His unquenchable humour, his fund of stories, his cheerfulness under manifest suffering captivated everybody ; and the carrier, perceiving how he swayed the little crowd, nudged him and whispered that, were he the devil himself, to the gates of Paris he should come !

It had been agreed that when papers were inspected Louvet should lie full length on the floor of the wain, protected by the wraps and bundles of the Jacobins. But the passport, though no doubt the gravest, would not be the only jeopardy. The fellow-voyagers seemed of a substantial *bourgeois* class ; bent on alighting, for meals and bed, at the snuggest hostelries *en route*. Now Louvet, albeit his Jacobins surmised it not of the pallid little high-hearted man, was a character of exceeding fame in revolutionary France. His news-sheet, *La Sentinelle*, placarded far and wide on walls up to the day of his proscription, had blown his name throughout the country. In any place of general resort he might easily be recognised ; and recognition would limit his term of life to four-and-twenty hours.

The first stage was uneventful.

At Le Bois-Rémont, a hamlet of five or six cottages, the misadventure of Aixe was but just avoided.

It was a freezing day, and Louvet had got down to warm his blood with a feeble trot. He plumped into a National Guard. "Warmish, eh?" said Louvet. "Ah!" observed the guard. "And if you'd like to see me a bit warmer maybe you'll stand me a glass." "I will, by gad!" said Louvet, and limped into the inn at which the caravan had halted. He sent out a glass, loitering at the bar, watching furtively the business of the passports. When that was done he strolled back to the carrier, who saluted him with a most approving wink.

At Châteauroux news was wafted to the travellers of the execution of Madame Roland; and from this hour until the journey's end Louvet did not cease to tremble for the fate of Lodoïska, whom the beautiful and heroic Roland had loved exceedingly. And now indeed, one anxious and distressful stage succeeding to another, he had every day the tidings of some dear, devoted head fallen to the guillotine; and all the while he must maintain unchecked his flow of spirits, his sallies and his quips. In an inner pocket he preserved 'a tiny phial of opium; but the unfading image of Lodoïska rose for ever in his mind, subduing the impulse to suicide. "*Ô mon épouse idolâtrée! Ô Lodoïska!*"

Into Orleans, with its burden of Jacobins and their heterogeneous fardels, the wain rolled at sunrise. Here the hazards of the Girondin were multiplied. He had entered the chief city of the Department that had chosen him as its representative in the National Assembly; and he entered it "*fugitif, déguisé, proscrit*"; buried among the packages in a carrier's cart, and devoutly hoping one thing only—that Orleans would suffer him to crawl out as he had crawled in, with a head still

fixed in the common way to his shoulders. The scaffold in Orleans' market-place was running with the blood of his adherents—daily sacrificed under the now ignominious nickname of *Louvetins*.

Amid this rabid population Louvet, whose life in Orleans was scarcely worth ten minutes' purchase, tarried four hours, while the carrier went here and there on his customary errands.

At the barrier of the town the caravan was challenged.

The carrier cried out impatiently that the passports had been shown and were in order.

“Never mind about passports,” said the guard. “Let all of you get out!” A Jacobiness thrust her face through the canvas. “What's the meaning of this?” asked she. “Let all of you get out,” repeated the guard. There was nothing for it but obedience. Louvet, at the first summons, had begun his celebrated vanishing trick and was now flat in the cart. The women, to keep their garments spread about him, clung in their seats. “Women, too!” persisted the guard. Somebody again protested that the passports—— “Who's talking of passports?” shouted the guard. “It's faces I want, not passports. Now, are you going to get out, or have we got to fetch you?”

The thought swam into Louvet's mind that, for the sake of the seven Samaritans whose lives he was imperilling, he should reveal himself. It was too late. As the last of the party stepped reluctantly out of the cart the officer jumped into it. Some straw and a portion of a cloak were all the covering that remained to Louvet, who slipped a pistol from his pocket and placed the muzzle in his mouth.

“I heard, I felt him, getting into the cart. He

touched my thigh with his foot. He stooped and groped among the parcels this way and that, and kicked them over and over. His hands never once came near me, his eyes must have strayed over me, and never saw me."

There was one great pistol-shot in the French Revolution (or is this even yet among the mysteries?) and a second would have sundered Louvet and Lodoïska. The guard had the unconscious grace to avert it by descending that moment from the waggon. The carrier, says Louvet, was white and shaking when he took up the reins.

The agitations of the journey began anew at every town, every village, every collection of huts where there was question of any sort to be posed and answered. At Étampes an "inquisitive Jacobin climbed on the step, and put his head into the waggon to read the passports; and, looking round, reckoned on his fingers to satisfy himself that the papers tallied with the number of the passengers." At Longjumeau some guest in the public dining-room glanced at Louvet and began to hum a song of his.

As Paris loomed on them, his Jacobins—who, since the moment of departure from Limoges, had held his life at their disposal—were more than ever tender for his safety. "The notion of the stoppage at the barriers affrighted us. Our precautions were redoubled." There was no need of them. The great waggon creaked unmolested, almost unheeded, through the gate. It was the 6th of December, 1793. Summer, autumn, winter, Louvet had been a hundred and sixty-five days on the run for life. In the Rue d'Enfer, against the walls of the Chartreux monastery, he felt the soil of Paris beneath his foot. Equal



to any stress of fortune, Louvet had tears to drown the wind ; and this tribute he paid anew in wringing hands with the seven faithful Jacobins who had been swapping lives with him since Limoges.

He took the carrier aside, pressed on him his last hundred francs of paper money and a gold watch worth six times that amount, and said :—but we know how charmingly (and tearfully) he would say it.

He had now but to seek Lodoïska in the lodging he remembered. It might be thought that he was running into the lion's den, but he was "safer being meek than fierce," and found in the Paris of these days an inviolable shelter. With Lodoïska he opened shop as a publisher and bookseller. The town, crowding to stare at them, found a rather plain-looking young woman and a weakly little short-sighted and slovenly man. But they were heroine and hero, for all the disappointment of their looks ; and vengeance in the end was Louvet's, for he survived Robespierre and died in his bed.



X

THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPRESS  
AND THE DENTIST

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE'S ELOPEMENT FROM THE  
TUILERIES

*"Sceptre and Crown  
Must tumble down."*—SHIRLEY.

*"She's beautiful."*—"KING HENRY VI."

*"Go, call a coach, and let a coach be called,  
And let the man that calls it be the caller!"*

"BOMBASTES FURIOSO."



## THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPRESS AND THE DENTIST

### I

**D**URING six weeks the Empress Eugénie, acting as Regent for the Emperor Napoleon III, had scarcely laid her head on the pillow. For nearly a week she had not taken off her black cashmere dress. The Second Empire existed only in name, and to the Regent in the palace of the Tuileries every hour of every day brought a telegram announcing some fresh defeat of the French troops at the hands of the Germans.

On the heels of defeat came disaster. Some time in the afternoon of Saturday, September 3rd, 1870, the Minister of the Interior silently handed to the Empress a despatch from the Emperor : " The army is overthrown and captive. I myself am a prisoner." It was the news of Sedan.

At the sitting of the Chamber that evening Jules Favre laid on the table a motion for the deposition of the Imperial dynasty.

Her last night at the Tuileries the Empress is said to have passed almost or entirely alone. For a fortnight she had been kept up with the aid of strong coffee, turning to chloral when she sought sleep. There were no murmurs of the city to disquiet her through the hours between dark and dawn. Paris, familiar enough with the clash and reek of revolution, was ignorant as yet that 82,000 Frenchmen

had just gone into captivity. Paris that lovely night lay mute beneath a starlit azure in which the moon glided behind the towers of Notre-Dame. A romantic young aristocrat, on his way from the momentous meeting of the Chamber, tells us (years later) that as he crossed the Carrousel he glanced at the Tuileries where the lovely Empress sat watching out her last night of royalty. "Above the illuminated vestibule, above the guard whose bayonets glittered in the light, a ray shining from a window marked the spot where were the private apartments of Eugénie. And, sad at heart, I thought of that poor woman who, far from her captive husband, far from her isolated son, was weeping and keeping watch during her last night of sovereignty." But other wives, other mothers were soon to be weeping and watching, whose husbands, whose sons kept their bivouac between the lances of the Uhlans.

Some sense of danger lured Paris from bed in the earliest hours of Sunday, the historic 4th. The faubourgs began to be astir. After the sitting of the Chamber, when General de Palikao, in words that smote the Assembly dumb, had very briefly recounted the great capitulation, the newspaper presses had been working at top speed ; and scarcely was the sun risen on a warm and singularly beautiful morning, when the newsboys were rousing the Rue de Rivoli with the cry : " The Emperor a prisoner ! " It gathered Paris in great, silent, wondering swarms from the borders of the city to the centre.

Even before this day, many days before it, Paris had presented a strange appearance to the Parisians. The first reverses of the French troops—who had gone to the war, almost literally, without food,

without shoes, without arms—had created, not a panic, but the rumours of a siege ; and the environs of the capital had emptied themselves into it. The peasants had harvested in haste ; through every gate of Paris they had come with their crops and provisions ; barges on the Seine had brought wine and grain and cattle ; thousands of vehicles had driven in, loaded with women and children, with household utensils, with sacks of corn and potatoes, with cupboards transformed into hen-coops or rabbit-hutches. It had cost five hundred francs a day to hire a furniture van for transport, and families had been seen travelling cheerfully into Paris in hearses, with their goods and chattels piled around them.

It is said that the crowd which on Sunday morning swept slowly but ceaselessly from the rim of the town to the seats of government was not so much hostile as curious and inquisitive ; but no one in authority could know this ; and less perhaps than anyone else could the Empress herself know it. Sedan meant the end of Empire ; the Emperor (not a dozen of his subjects being aware that he had set out on the campaign a sick and hopeless man) would be held responsible ; the Empress was his representative at the Tuileries—and crowned heads had had reason to beware the wrath of Paris.

We may fancy the Empress, on her way to private Mass this anxious Sunday morning, wondering distractedly what course to take. She was, unfortunately, on bad terms with General Trochu, whom Napoleon had appointed Governor of Paris, and whom indeed Her Majesty had grievously slighted. Should she fly from Paris ? She may have remembered that in 1848 King Louis Philippe had done so

—in a hackney cab—under the style of “Mr. William Smith.” The beautiful Spaniard was not only a brave woman, she was a woman of high courage; and those who were about her at this crisis have declared that she never had a thought of saving herself. As she took her way to Mass—at what hour we know not—her ear must have drawn in some echo of the gatherings in the streets, now growing noisier. Well, should she face the tumult? As yet, at any rate, there could be no such terrible ordeal as Marie Antoinette’s last journey through the streets of Paris, bound in a tumbril. The Empress looked superb on horseback: should she ride through the capital, appeal to the generosity of the people, or offer resistance to rioters? She may have thought of all these measures; it is said that she did: what seems certain is that Her Majesty had no very definite plan of any kind.

Of the events of the earlier hours of Sunday several versions have come down to us, and they are not all in harmony. One story is to the effect that the Empress was going to hear the *grand'messe* at St. Germain-l’Auxerrois; that while she was waiting to be dressed for the service her devoted friend Mme. Lebreton, arrived in haste with news of the proclamation of the Republic; that the two ladies presently perceived themselves alone in the palace, the whole staff having fled; that they roamed the Tuileries for an hour in increasing terror, and then, rushing into the street, took possession of a passing cab, Mme. Lebreton discovering in her purse a providential five-franc piece wherewithal to pay the fare.

But this is the wrong story altogether.

There were, in fact, several persons on duty at



the palace (while the staff seems to have remained at least as long as the Empress did) on Sunday morning: to wit, General de Montebello, Admiral Jurien de la Gravière, the Marquis de la Grange, Mesdames de Renneval and de Sauley, the Comtesse Aguado, the Maréchale Canrobert, and Mesdames de la Poëze and de la Bedollière.

In so desperate a collision of circumstances these official ornaments of an imperial household were naturally worse than useless, and some of them probably much more frightened than the Empress, whose nerve—chloral notwithstanding—was still unsinking. But as to the state and mind of Paris she was not left too long in doubt. Between twelve and one on Sunday afternoon the Chamber was in session. The debate was not well begun when the Deputies were invaded by a mob from the streets; the very semicircle of the Chamber was swamped; and Gambetta, Jules Favre, and General de Palikao vanished or were driven out in the hubbub. In something like a whirlwind the Empire was blown out of France and the Republic proclaimed. Then appeared at the Tuileries a perplexed and not very coherent deputation from the Chamber, requesting the Empress to resign the throne. "I accept deposition," she said quietly, "but I refuse to be a deserter. If the preservation of my power is considered an obstacle to the defence [of Paris], would it be too much for a woman who has of her own free will descended from the throne to ask the Chamber to grant her the right to remain in Paris? I care not where I live or what rank I hold, if only I may share the suffering, the peril, the anguish of our besieged capital."

No deputation could perhaps have acceded to

this request. "Workmen were already knocking down the gilded eagles on the gates of the Tuileries." The crowd outside the gardens had become dense and menacing. "The dramatist, Victorien Sardou, was seen among them, demanding the officers of the Guard to let the soldiers be withdrawn, 'as the Tuileries belonged to the people.'"

The Empress stooped to necessity.

From the room in which she had received the deputation from the Chamber she passed into a private apartment where were assembled the few ladies-in-waiting. The Empress "had nothing on her head, and still held in her hand the cambric handkerchief with which she had dried her eyes, red with weeping, and had somewhat effaced, or smeared on her cheeks, the little touches of black crayon with which she was wont to line her eyes by way of making them appear larger—Spanish fashion."

The ladies-in-waiting, visibly affected, were standing up, and approached one after another to kiss the hand of their sovereign, who said to them: "In France one has no right to be unhappy."

Meanwhile, there had arrived at the Tuileries the Austrian and Italian Ambassadors, Prince Metternich and Chevalier Nigra, who urged upon the Empress the duty, nay necessity, of instant flight. The palace, they declared, was no longer safe; and added—with a touch of exaggeration—that the rioters were preparing to seize it. The poor lady, indeed, was almost pushed out of the home where for seventeen years she had reigned in splendour. She was utterly unready for so swift a setting-out. Not a trunk, not a bag was packed; no one thought of asking if the fugitive were furnished with money,

and she had not in her possession the smallest bank-note. "She threw a dark mantle over her shoulders and feverishly tied the strings of a black bonnet under her chin." Another chronicler says: "The too conspicuous pelerine by Worth was exchanged for a more sombre cloak, and the Empress hastily imprisoned her magnificent hair beneath a little black *capote* belonging to Mme. Virot." "In her reticule she hurriedly put a purse, a handkerchief, and a notebook."

Yet another says: "The Empress snatched up a waterproof, a hat with a brown veil, and some portraits." Thus the flight began.

One lady, Mme. Lebreton, sister of General Bourbaki, had insisted on sharing the fortunes of her mistress; and Chevalier Nigra, giving her his arm, led the way. The Empress followed, on the arm of Prince Metternich. "It had been decided that the party should go through the Imperial apartments, across the Louvre, and thus reach the gate towards the Place Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois. They rapidly crossed the left wing of the Tuileries, passed through the Museum gate and the picture-gallery"—some of the galleries of the palace, by the way, had been converted into hospitals for wounded soldiers, and the Empress had visited them daily—"down the stairs leading to the Assyrian Palace, and eventually reached the gateway that gave on to the square. The ex-Regent quitted the Louvre, while a huge crowd assembled at the opposite side; she still leant on Metternich's arm. Nigra and Mme. Lebreton accompanied her. They halted. 'Wait for me here,' said Richard [Metternich] to the two women. 'I am going to fetch my carriage. It is a plain one, with no coat of arms;

it is drawn by a white horse.' Metternich and Nigra proceeded in search of the brougham. During their prolonged absence the crowd grew greater and more violent. Madame Lebreton hailed a passing cab, pushed her Sovereign into it, and gave the coachman the address of one of her friends—'Besson, State Councillor, Boulevard Haussman.' The rest is common history—the drive to the Avenue de Wagram in search of Piennes, Chamberlain to the Empress, who was also out, and eventually Eugénie's arrival at the house of Dr. Evans, Avenue du Bois de Boulogne."

Another historian of the exodus tells us that Metternich had instructed his coachman to be in readiness, that the carriage was missing, and that he went alone in search of it. As the little group—the Empress, Mme. Lebreton, and Nigra—waited for him, the crowd in the street grew denser. An urchin in cap and blouse, recognising the Empress, exclaimed: "*Tiens! Voilà l'Impératrice! N'est elle pas jolte?*" and was instantly silenced by Nigra. Her Majesty must, one fancies, have been veiled; for who in Paris was unfamiliar with her splendid beauty? Yet the crowd had hitherto taken no note of her. Nigra, however, was now more alarmed, and certainly the moment was critical. "Just then . . . an unoccupied *fiacre* jolted by. Securing it, Nigra pushed the Empress and her companion into the cab, saying: 'Get in, Madame. We cannot wait for Metternich's brougham.'"

By whomsoever hailed, there is no doubt whatever about the *fiacre*, or hackney cab. It figures in all the records. Willy-nilly, the Empress had followed, after all, the inglorious example of Louis Philippe. She had fled in a four-wheeler.



An jurchin recognising the Empress, exclaimed: "Tiens! Voilà l'Impératrice! N'est elle pas jolie?" and was instantly silenced by Nigra.



Also, as has been seen, Her Majesty had vanished into this humble conveyance unmolested; but—what shall be said of the pair of Ambassadors, Metternich and Nigra, these squires of Imperial beauty in distress? Have we in history a more ungallant pair? Carelessly they sent her drifting in a cab—one or both of them—through the streets of an unfriendly Paris, through the streets of a Paris which, for all they could know, intended mischief to the woman whose husband the popular voice had just cast from his throne. Look at it any way, this comes very near to poltroonery. A princely Metternich or so, renowned in the social and diplomatic annals of Europe, should have been glad of his grave that Sunday afternoon; and this Metternich, and the gifted and superlatively handsome Nigra, had both of them long been rivals at Court for the friendship of the Empress whose reputation was unsullied. Let us dismiss them—with a passing glance at the memory of Marie Antoinette's Count Fersen, and Mary of Scots' "Little Douglas" who wafted her out of Loch Leven. All said, Ambassadors may save their skin—and these paltry two pass unhonoured from the story.

The good fairy of the piece is an American dentist, Dr. Thomas W. Evans, at whose house the Empress and her *dame de compagnie* drew up towards six on Sunday evening. At two or three doors she had knocked unavailingly; though, had the persons who led or hustled her from the Tuileries preserved their wits, or obeyed the commonest sense of chivalry, nothing should have been easier than to find for the Empress some secure or temporary shelter within a stone's throw of the palace. The district was thick with the residences of rich and loyal courtiers.

The keeper of the silver at the Tuileries, Maillard, has recorded in his register that the Empress left the palace by the Louvre entrance at half-past one on Sunday afternoon. The first stage of the flight—a ten minutes' drive the day before—had thus occupied her some four hours and a half.

## II

Dr. Evans, with a fine house in the Avenue Malakoff,<sup>1</sup> was a man of fortune, heart, courage, and European reputation. "Later," says d'Hérison, "when the sufferings and privations of the siege began, he instituted and maintained at his own expense the American Ambulance." "A man with a golden heart and a European reputation," is Frédéric Loliée's description of him.

"There are two ladies in the library who wish to see you, sir," said Dr. Evans's servant.<sup>2</sup> "They have not given their names . . . and have been waiting for you more than an hour."

In the library Dr. Evans, his mind bare of any notion of adventure—no hint of the flight from the Tuileries had been conveyed to him—found the Empress and Mme. Lebreton. "I have come to you," said the Empress, "for protection and assistance, because I have full confidence in your devotion to my family"—and she summarised the history of her day. "She stopped speaking, and tears filled her eyes."

Had her Majesty a plan? Dr. Evans asked.

<sup>1</sup> Or was it the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne? Two residences at least have been assigned to Dr. Evans.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Evans's narrative in the "Century Magazine," October, 1905.



Yes; Her Majesty wished to go to England; wished to start at once. "At first she suggested that at about ten o'clock that evening I should take her in my carriage as far as Poissy, some fifteen miles from Paris, saying that we might meet there a night-train which would leave the Gare St. Lazare at a quarter before one o'clock in the morning, and would reach Poissy at half-past one o'clock, and arrive in Havre a little before eight o'clock. She added that we could stop in Havre the next day (Monday), and take the boat which would leave for Southampton in the evening. The objections to adopting this course were pointed out, and other suggestions were offered. The questions to be considered were too important to be decided hastily. I wished to reflect upon the subject, and so asked to be excused for a short time."

Dr. Evans sought the counsel of a friend and compatriot, Dr. Crane, and together they considered the best and safest means of getting the Empress out of France. At the quiet seaside resort of Deauville Mrs. Evans was taking a holiday, and to this point it was decided to travel in Dr. Evans's own carriage. Relays of horses could probably be found along the route, and a vessel of some sort at Deauville. The Empress accepted the plan and agreed to start early the next morning.

"The passports which the Empress had brought with her were now examined, and one of them was found to have been obtained at the British Embassy. In it, all whom it might concern were 'requested and required to allow Dr. C—— (British subject), going to England accompanied by a patient, Mrs. B—— (also a British subject), to pass freely, also without let or hindrance, and to afford them every

assistance and protection of which they may stand in need.' ”

This passport, dated August 13, and signed “Lyons,” had been “viséed” and stamped, on the same date, at the Prefecture of Police. “It was exactly what we wanted: it was not only a passport to England, but its terms were such as to enable us to complete our plan and justify it in the most plausible manner possible. Dr. Crane would personate the physician, Dr. C——; the Empress, the patient; I, her brother; and Mme. Lebreton the nurse.” It may be added that this lucky passport was a genuine affair made out for a well-known English physician and his patient. It had not been called for, and had been sent to the Tuileries, “to be used, if needed.”

When the Empress and her companion had retired for the night, Dr. Crane went out to reconnoitre. Returning towards 1 a.m. he reported all quiet in the neighbourhood. Dr. Evans made a reconnaissance in the direction of the Porte Maillot, the gate through which in a few hours they were, if possible, to escape from Paris. He remarked “that cabs and carriages were permitted to pass in and out without apparently being subjected to much, if any, inspection on the part of the guard on duty.” Through what remained of the night the two gentlemen kept vigil together.

About five in the morning the host had a light breakfast prepared, and before five-thirty they were all in the carriage. Over her black cashmere dress the Empress wore “a dark-coloured, thin, waterproof cloak or mackintosh. A narrow white collar about the neck, dark gloves, and a round black Derby hat” — Mrs. Evans’s, I think — “to which was

attached a plain black veil, completed her costume. Not the slightest attempt had been made to disguise her identity, beyond such concealment as might be afforded by a dress too simple and common to attract attention.” Mme. Lebreton occupied the back seat on the right ; the Empress the seat on the left, where she would be partly out of sight of the guards at the Porte Maillot. Dr. Crane seated himself opposite to Mme. Lebreton, and Dr. Evans faced the Empress. The “ faithful coachman, Célestin,” was told to drive to Saint-Germain.

On this fair September morning they saw the sweepers in the streets, shopkeepers already taking down their shutters, milk-carts and the market-waggons coming in from the country. The life of Paris, in a word, was beginning as if no revolution were in progress.

Arrived at the gate, “ we were ordered to halt. As the officer of the guard approached, I let down the window at my right, and on his coming close to the door of the carriage and asking me where we were going, I leaned forward, and partly filling the opening with my head and shoulders, told him that I was going with my carriage, horses, and coachman into the country to spend the day with the friends who were with me ; that I was an American ; that I lived in Paris, and was well known to everybody in the neighbourhood. He did not ask my name. Had he done so I probably should have given it. My reply to his question seemed to be satisfactory, for, stepping back, he looked up at the coachman and said : ‘ *Allez !* ’ ”

In a moment they had passed the outpost and sentries, were out of Paris, and on the road to the coast.

As they drove at a good pace through the suburbs of Bougival, Marly, and Le Pecq, where the gardens were still resplendent, the Empress was by turns animated and tearful. She spoke of the Emperor's despatch of Saturday, the surrender at Sedan, the Emperor himself a prisoner. "It is terrible! I cannot think of it—and I myself am here a fugitive."

Saint-Germain-en-Laye came in sight. "We had come again to a place where caution was necessary, because, before entering the city, we had to pass the toll-gate where the *octroi* officials were stationed; and an inspection of our carriage for the purpose of seeing whether we had with us any articles subject to the city toll, was certain to take place. . . . Remembering that near Saint-Germain there lived an English lady, one of my acquaintances, who was very well known, and was loved by all the inhabitants on account of her kindness to the poor, I had decided to state, should I be asked where we were going, or if any trouble should arise, that we were friends of Lady Trotter. I was nearly certain that any of her friends would be respected, while at the same time I was persuaded that a few words to that lady would be sufficient to make her enter into my plans for the safety of the Empress."

But there was no trouble at Saint-Germain. The travellers had not the air of chicken-smugglers, and their carriage was allowed to pass. The tension of the journey was now sensibly relaxed. It was pretty clear that Paris was not aware of the Empress's escape with her dentist; there was no pursuit, and no telegram to arrest the party had reached Saint-Germain. At this stage, indeed, their anxiety was chiefly for the condition of the horses, now showing signs of distress. From Poissy—famed as the birth-

place of Louis IX—they took the road to Mantes, along the right bank of the Seine. Twelve miles from Mantes they stopped at a wayside inn to water the horses and get a little food for themselves. Mme. Lebreton and the gentlemen, at any rate, were famished, though the Empress made light of refreshment. Wine and a yard or two of bread, cheese and Bologna sausage were despatched in haste; and the Empress, who did not leave the carriage, was persuaded to use Dr. Crane's pocket-knife on a slice of the "polony," which she "pronounced excellent."

Mantes was entered at eleven on a radiant morning, and now it was plain that the doctor's horses would get no farther. Evans set off on foot to seek fresh ones and another carriage. The day's journals had just come down from Paris, and at a stationer's shop he scanned the *Figaro* for any reference to the Empress. Curiously, there was not a word of her flight from the Tuileries, and on went the doctor again for horses and a carriage. At the omnibus office he hired for thirty francs "a very comfortable and decent-looking affair," which was to be relinquished at Pacy. At Pacy, said the proprietor, it would be easy to hire another conveyance to Évreux. Célestin had orders to take his horses back when they were rested, and through the outskirts of Mantes the new jehu conducted his fares to the Route Impériale (name shortly to be changed!) on Évreux road. The route to Deauville and the sea was now by Pacy-sur-Eure, Évreux, La Rivière de Thibouville, Lisieux, and Pont l'Évêque. At a little place called La Commanderie the village nags gave out, and Dr. Evans, on another voyage of discovery, found "under a shed a barouche which must have

seen the Allies. A peasant offered to go into the fields in search of horses, and, his offer having been accepted, two old screws were at length harnessed to the venerable trap." The Empress, who had the royal knack of adaptation, took all in the best part.

"At Évreux the road lay right through the middle of the garrison, who were drawn up in the middle of the principal square, and surrounded by the entire population. The new Prefect, just arrived from Paris, and backed by the municipal council, was in the act of proclaiming the Republic." Dr. Evans, putting a bold face on the matter, requested the Prefect's permission to pass on without waiting for the conclusion of this patriotic ceremony. Permission granted, they sped on, "thousands of eyes watching the progress of the venerable barouche, wherein lay hidden the wife of Cæsar."

It was a wearing journey for the four cooped in the barouche; and though the peril of the Empress was scarcely that of Marie Antoinette on the road to Varennes, there were certain risks throughout. Her composure, her spasmodic gaiety, underwent transformations of hysteria; and "in a little ditch at the side of the road" we have a glimpse of Dr. Evans washing and wringing out a tiny cambric handkerchief, which is afterwards hanging at the carriage window to dry in the breeze.

D'Hérison says that the journey from Paris to Deauville was ended at four in the afternoon. It was not; and, with the means at the runaways' disposal, it could not have been. Towards midnight they stopped at another of the wretched inns of rural France (wretched, for the most part, since the Middle Ages), where the landlord offered one spare

room with two beds. "Why, we are all brothers and sisters," said the Empress, "and we must have two rooms." A second chamber was equipped, and under this roof they passed the night. Deauville was gained at noon next day.

Mrs. Evans at this haven had been premonished of the coming of her guest, and was prepared. "Thank heaven!" exclaimed the Empress, "I am safe!"

At Deauville also was Sir John Burgoyne, owner of the cutter-yacht *Gazelle*, who takes the stage in the fourth and last act of the drama. Dr. Evans, hunting for a vessel, had introduced himself to Sir John, who did not know him and was disposed to reject as crazy his account of the flight from Paris. "I acknowledge," says he, "that I did not believe him, and told him so; but asked him to go into the cabin and speak to Lady Burgoyne." Lady Burgoyne, by good hap, had some acquaintance with Dr. Evans, and Sir John, apprised of this, no longer hesitated. At twelve o'clock that night he received the Empress on board the *Gazelle*—having, one hour earlier, got rid of an inquisitive police agent. At seven in the morning the little cutter sailed quietly from Deauville harbour; white ensign at the mainsail-peak (her owner was not for sneaking off); and "another white ensign at the topmast-head, to show that we had someone of importance on board." In a gale that became terrific as the English coast was approached ("I had not before," says the skipper, "seen a worse sea"), Sir John Burgoyne bore the Empress to Ryde.

When the yacht had made the harbour, "the party landed at once and went to the Pier Hotel, the proprietor of which, at the sight of two drenched,

shabby-looking, dishevelled women, accompanied by a man even more thoroughly drenched than they were, shut his door. They took refuge in the York Hotel, where they were received without any display of eagerness."

On the afternoon of this day the flight ended at Hastings.

Forty-four years are unfolded ; and on an afternoon of autumn, 1914, an aged ex-Empress, widowed and childless, leans on her stick at the gate of her English park, and watches the tramp of a company of German prisoners of war.



## XI

### AN IRISH 'FORTY-EIGHTER

#### THE HAZARDS OF JOHN MITCHEL BETWEEN TASMANIA AND SAN FRANCISCO

*“Through thick and thin, both over bank and bush.”—SPENSER.*

*“There’s something in a flying horse.”—WORDSWORTH.*

*“A wet sheet and a flowing sea.”—CUNNINGHAM.*

*“Erin go bragh !”*



## AN IRISH 'FORTY-EIGHTER

### I

A STERLING and impressive figure of a rebel is John Mitchel.<sup>1</sup> In the middle of the last century he personified rebellion in Ireland as did no other foe of British Governments. A rebel "from principle," in Burke's expressive phrase, Mitchel was no hedge-fighter, no "moonlighter"; he came out into the sun to do battle. It is, perhaps, with him that the modern struggle in Ireland begins. His policy, more diplomatically conceived, more adroitly applied, was Parnell's in a later generation.

In Irish political warfare there is little to compare with the brilliantly audacious wit of Mitchel's campaign against the Government. Daniel O'Connell had thought that Repeal of the Union could be won, as Catholic Emancipation had been won. His advocacy of "moral force principles," of warfare "within the lines of the constitution," palled upon his followers as the weight of years bore him under. The party of Young Ireland, whose aims differed widely from those of Conciliation Hall, began to talk of an armed struggle; and newspapers, attain-

<sup>1</sup> Born at Camnish, near Dungiven, Co. Derry, November 3rd, 1815. His father was the Rev. John Mitchel, at that time Presbyterian minister of Dungiven, "and a good patriot, too, having been—as we learn from a statement casually made by Mr. Mitchel in Conciliation Hall—one of the United Irishmen of 1798." ("Speeches from the Dock," edited by T. D. and D. B. Sullivan.)

ing as they echoed these hints to a circulation not before approached in Ireland, gave, willingly or not willingly, an extraordinary impetus to the movement.

Gavan Duffy and Thomas Davis in the "Nation" lent no aid to the friends of moral force; and when death removed Davis, and his place was taken by Mitchel, it began to be war to the knife against the weaker brethren. Amid the suffering and terrors of the Famine, Mitchel determined to bring matters, if possible, to a crisis of violence. He withdrew from the "Nation" at the close of 1847, and founded the "United Irishman." The title was significant, and more significant was the aphorism appropriated as a motto from Wolfe Tone. "Our independence must be had at all hazards. If the men of property will not support us, they must fall; we can support ourselves by the aid of that numerous and respectable class of the community, the men of no property." For the whips of the "Nation" the "United Irishman" offered scorpions.

John Mitchel began to lay it on in the very first number. Sedition, unmasked and of a mordant humour, flowed from the most gifted and intrepid pen in Ireland. The first editorial was a letter from Mitchel to the Viceroy, "The Right Hon. the Earl of Clarendon, Englishman, calling himself Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant-General and General Governor of Ireland." The struggle engaged in by Tone and Emmet was to be renewed, said Mitchel; "the Holy War, to sweep this island clear of the English name and nation." The conspiracy of '98 had been a secret one, betrayed by spies and informers, as is the fate of almost every hidden plot in Ireland. That of 'Forty-eight, declared Mitchel,

was to be an absolutely open one, and Lord Clarendon was informed that he could "have a Castle detective about the 'United Irishman' office in Trinity Street . . . provided the man be sober and honest." This extraordinary and terrible address concluded in these terms :

"In plain English, my Lord Earl, the deep and irreconcilable disaffection of this people to all British laws, lawgivers, and law administrators shall find a voice. That holy Hatred of foreign dominion which nerved our noble predecessors fifty years ago for the dungeon, the field and the gallows (though of late years it has worn a vile nisi prius gown, and snivelled somewhat in courts of law and on spouting platforms) still lives, thank God ! and glows as fierce and hot as ever. To educate that holy Hatred, to make it know itself, and avow itself, and, at last, fill itself full, I hereby devote the columns of the 'United Irishman.'"

For some weeks he went on in this tremendous strain, urging the peasant farmers, "Above all, let the man among you who has no gun sell his garment and buy one"; and presently saluting the Viceroy as "Her Majesty's Executioner-General and General Butcher of Ireland." Mitchel, of course, knew well that his voice would soon be silenced, and he made the most of his time. Never before had the Government been so mercilessly assailed. In the spring of '48 they resolved to close with him, and in May he took his stand in the dock. He was tried for "treason-felony," which was then the newest crime in the calendar. A jury of Irishmen, impartially selected, must have been impressed by the defence of the veteran Robert Holmes, Emmet's brother-in-law; but the Government were taking no risks that day,

and (as Lord Clarendon afterwards admitted) the box had been most carefully packed. Mitchel says :

“ In short, the cause of ‘ civilisation ’ and of British Law and Order required that I should be removed to a great distance from Ireland, and that my office and printing materials should become the property of Her Majesty. Though the noble old Robert Holmes, who advocated the prisoner’s cause that day, had had the tongue of men and of angels, he could have made no impression there. A verdict of ‘ Guilty,’ and a sentence of fourteen years’ transportation, had been ordered by the Castle : and it was done.”

He was laid away in the penal settlement of Bermuda. Here, therefore, begins the “ diary kept in a cell ” ; albeit Mitchel’s cell was a hutch to himself on one of the three hulks of the convict station. He wore his own clothes, was waited on by a convict servant, and was allowed to put on paper his reflections, observations and implacable sentiments touching England and the English. His confinement, while not cruel, was close enough, solitary enough ; and he began to be a prey to asthma. He bore all sufferings uncomplainingly, obeyed all rules unflinchingly, and was respected from the first by governors, doctors, and gaolers. He writes thus of his condition and circumstances :

“ Indeed, weak as I am in body, I feel stronger in soul than ever I was ; for which I sincerely thank Almighty God. Many foul shadows that seemed threatening to rise up between me and the sun have scattered themselves and sunk. I have risen into a clearer atmosphere, and feel myself more in accord with whatsoever is good in this world. . . . I be-think me, that if there be work for me to do on the

earth, the Almighty will keep me alive to do it, and draw me out of this pit in His own time—that if not, He knows what is best for every one of us.”

Providence, in the guise of a good doctor, drew him “out of this pit” in the very nick of time. Half dead, he was despatched with a shipload of convicts to the Cape. The Cape, with howls of indignation, rejected the cargo of felony (though Mitchel, it seems, might have landed, had he chosen), which from there was borne to what at this date was classic soil for expatriated British crime, Van Diemen's Land.

## II

The first entry in Mitchel's “Jail Journal” (the greatest literary performance, I think, of any prisoner in any language) is this :

“*May 27, 1848.*—On this day, about four o'clock in the afternoon, I, John Mitchel, was kidnapped, and carried off from Dublin, in chains, as a convicted ‘Felon.’ ”

Nearly two years pass, covering one period of ten months' solitary confinement in Bermuda and another of eleven months' and seventeen days' cruising in the *Neptune* ; and on the 6th of April, 1850, we have another entry :

“The mountainous southern coast of Van Diemen's Land ! It is a soft blue day ; soft airs, laden with all the fragrances of those antarctic woods, weave an atmosphere of ambrosia around me. . . .

“Old Ocean smiles—that multitudinous rippling laugh seen in vision by the chained Prometheus. Even my own sick and weary soul (so kind and bounteous is our Mother Earth) feels lightened, refreshed, uplifted. Yet there, to port, loom the moun-

tains, whereunto I am to be chained for years, with a vulture gnawing my heart. Here is the very place, the Kaf, or Caucasus, where I must die a daily death and make a nightly descent into hell."

It was scarcely so bad as this.<sup>1</sup> Mitchel in Tasmania was not a convict. He is more properly described as a political exile. Somewhere in the "Jail Journal" he speaks of the free settlers as the aristocracy of the island. But the rebels banished from Ireland, the most honest foes whom the English Government of that day had encountered, were the aristocracy of the prisoners of Australasia. Mitchel, accepting a ticket-of-leave, had permission to live at large in any "police district" he might select; and in the middle of April, 1850, he takes possession of a snug homestead, Nant Cottage, some three miles from the village of Bothwell: a paradise in a valley, with the little river Clyde running through it—a prison-paradise. He was a farmer with a farm of two hundred acres, good pasturage for sheep and cattle, woods to roam through, and kangaroo-hunting. His wife came from Ireland to join him. His lot at Bothwell was shared by John Martin, who, transported some months earlier, had made as great a mark as Mitchel in the Ireland that was at odds with England. Martin had studied medicine and surgery in Dublin, had lived as a country gentle-

<sup>1</sup> The extreme horrors of banishment to this region were over in Mitchel's day. The "Jail Journal" reflects nothing of them. Port Macquarie, on the western coast of Tasmania, or Van Diemen's land, the deepest circle of the whole Australian inferno, the place of which the history is a thirteen years' nightmare, had ceased to be a penal settlement in 1833. Had Mitchel even heard of it, or had an authentic story of it, the "Journal" would have blazed into a page or two of very proper indignation. Histories and official reports are well summarised in Ives's recent "History of Penal Methods."



man on his estate at Longhorne, had visited America, and had returned to Ireland and Dublin to take his part in the fray as founder and first editor of the "Irish Felon." The "Irish Felon" made the Government uncomfortable for a month or so, and was raided and quashed, and John Martin went over the seas. Among the rebel brotherhood of Tasmania he was known as "John Knox."

Throughout the vast region which in the annals is rather vaguely distinguished as Botany Bay, there were at this date not a few exiled Irish, resolute enemies of England and all English Governments, but men of character and moral worth. Of such were Mitchel, Martin, Smith O'Brien, Kevin O'Doherty, Clarence Mangan, Meagher, and others. These banished rebels were for the most part settling in their seats of ejection under the Southern Cross. Not many of them were men for an escape. To Ireland, deep imaged in all their souls, they could go home no more—as refugees, that is to say, from British bonds. In one indifferent essay at flight Smith O'Brien had been foiled.

But there is always the man who is bent on doing it. If he be fit for an arduous escape he is far from contemning risks; but, having well weighed, embraces them. Return to Ireland was as impossible for John Mitchel as for Smith O'Brien, but to a man of Mitchel's literary genius America was an open door. It was not a refuge, it was a fresh career. New York was a Dublin where juries were not packed for opposition writers. And from New York to the cottage in Tasmania came the hint of liberty.

In the summer of 1853 certain Irishmen in America were taking measures to effect the release of certain

Irishmen in Van Diemen's Land, and on this mission "Pat" Smyth sailed from New York. Arrived at Tasmania, the emissary had a secret interview with Mitchel, O'Brien, and Kevin O'Doherty. His instructions from the Irish Directory were to procure the escape of Mitchel and O'Brien, "or either of us, if both could not go." As O'Brien was transported for life, Mitchel and O'Doherty urged him to take the first chance. O'Brien declined, insisting that he had had his chance and failed; "and the expenses incurred by it had been defrayed by public money." Mitchel then said that he would make the attempt himself. "Already," he notes in the "Journal," "I begin to sniff the air of the upper world, and to see daylight through the opening gates of Hades." It was next decided that "John Knox" (Martin) should fly with him.

Smyth at once set off for Melbourne, to seek a ship. Good horses being essential to the business, Mitchel had the humorous notion of buying from the police magistrate of the district, Mr. Davis; and this gentleman innocently sold him his white half-Arab, Donald, fleet and of great endurance. By the 9th of April all seemed propitious. Smyth had made arrangements with John Macnamara, owner of the brigantine *Waterlily*; and Mitchel and "John Knox" were told that they had merely to hold themselves in readiness. On the 11th the plot was blown to the moon. Smyth's plan, indeed, had been known to the Governor for days; the spot of embarkation, the signals to be used, everything. Smyth had been arrested, and, after a night's journey with the police in an open spring-waggon, was lying ill of a fever.

Two months went by. Early in June, Smyth was

well again, and an inmate of Nant Cottage; the second scheme was afoot. This centred in the hope of a vessel bound for Sydney, which was to sail immediately from Hobart Town. "John Knox" had finally decided on keeping out of the affair; "because," says Mitchel, "if we miss the vessel at Hobart Town, we might then have to spend several weeks on the island, and be subjected to much hardship (for it is now the depth of winter), and assume various disguises—for which he is not well adapted."

Mitchel's prime duty now was to rid himself of his parole by formal act of resignation. Taking leave of his wife (who from the first had abetted the enterprise) he started, accompanied by Smyth, to ride into Bothwell. On the way, a messenger coming at a gallop from Hobart Town stopped them with the tidings that the vessel, afraid of delaying longer, had sailed for Sydney. "As we now stood, therefore, there was no arrangement for escaping out of the island at all; and if we got clear of the police office, it was a matter of indifference to me whether I should ride north, south, or east. Westward lay impassable wilderness." On they rode into the township, past the police-barrack, and to the office of magistrate Davis.

"We dismounted. I walked in first, through the little gate leading into the court, through the door, which opened into a hall or passage, and thence into the court-room, where I found his worship sitting as usual. Near him sat Mr. Robinson, the police clerk.

" 'Mr. Davis,' I said, 'here is a copy of a note which I have just despatched to the governor; I have thought it necessary to give you a copy.' The note was as follows :

BOTHWELL, *8th June*, 1853.

TO THE LIEUT.-GOV., ETC.

SIR,—I hereby resign the 'ticket-of-leave,' and withdraw my parole.

I shall forthwith present myself before the police magistrate of Bothwell, at his office, show him a copy of this note, and offer myself to be taken into custody.

Your obedient servant,

JOHN MITCHEL.

"Mr. Davis took the note; it was open. 'Do you wish me,' he said, 'to read it?' 'Certainly; it was for that I brought it.' He glanced over the note, and then looked at me."

At this moment Smyth entered the office and placed himself at Mitchel's side. Both to the magistrate and his clerk "Pat" was known as the correspondent of the famous "New York Tribune": known also as the man who had come expressly from America to get one or more of the expatriated Irishmen out of Van Diemen's Land. So completely was Mr. Davis taken aback that he sat speechless in his chair. Mitchel, as cool as possible, suggested that the magistrate should take him forthwith into custody. His worship, staring at Mitchel, made no move, gave no order. Smyth, hand in pocket, was toying with the butt of his revolver. Mitchel had a brace of pistols in his breast-pocket, and carried a heavy riding-whip. "Well, good morning, sir!" said Mitchel, putting on his hat.

"The moment I said 'Good morning,' Mr. Davis shouted, 'No—no! stay here! Rainsford! Constables!' The police clerk sat at his desk, looking

into vacancy. We walked out together through the hall ; the constable in the district constable's office, who generally acts as his clerk, now ran out, and on being desired to stop us, followed us through the court, and out into the street, but without coming very near. At the little gate leading out of the court into the street we expected to find the man on guard on the alert between us and our horses. But this poor constable, though he heard the magistrate's orders, and the commotion, did not move. He was holding two horses, one with each hand, and looked on in amazement, while we passed him, and jumped into our saddles."

Away they went ; residents of Bothwell, who quite understood the situation, chuckling on the pathway ; and boys at the corner, admiring the stride of the Arab, shouting : " Three to one on the white 'un ! " This was Mitchel's last impression of Bothwell on the banks of the Tasmanian Clyde.

They galloped on till they were fairly in the forest ; then, dismounting, exchanged horses and jackets, and a temporary farewell ; Smyth fleeing due north on Fleur-de-lis, and Mitchel on white Donald shaping a farther course into the woods. Presently he met by appointment a certain J—— H——, son of an English settler of those parts, who knew the bush like a native. They struck over the mountains to Westbury district, inhabited chiefly by Irish immigrants. The coast lay a hundred and thirty miles northwards, but their mounts were fresh and in the best fettle. It was mid-winter, and the night black and frosty. High among the mountains they had to plunge three miles through an icy marsh. Lighting on a shepherd's hut, they were advised by the three occupants to proceed no farther that night ;

but Bothwell was not yet far enough in the rear, and with a shepherd for guide they felt their way again along an indistinguishable track. The kindly guide lost himself, and the pair of travellers.

“Neither backwards nor forwards could we move one yard: and there, within three miles of our proposed shelter for the night, we were forced to make our dismal bivouac. We lighted a fire with some dead branches (for no true bushman goes without matches); tied our poor horses to a honeysuckle tree; looked to our pistols; picked the least polygonal stones to sit down upon; lighted our pipes, and prepared to spend eight hours as jovially as possible. Soon sleep overtook us, from utter exhaustion, and we would lie a few minutes on the sharp stones by the fire until awakened by the scorching of our knees, while our spinal marrow was frozen into a solid icicle. Then we would turn our backs to the fire, and sleep again; but, in five minutes, our knees and toes were frozen; our moustaches stiff with ice, our spinal marrow dissolving in the heat. Then up again—another smoke, another talk.”

But Mitchel, robust and sinewy and thirty-five, was the man of men for his adventure; and the dawn found him and his young companion fit, and their horses fit: they pricked on to breakfast at the shanty of another shepherd, “old Job.” Job, it seems, was not unused to the business of escapes; so, while the wife cooked a great breakfast, the husband “presented me with a razor, looking-glass, basin, and soap, wherewith I made a complete transfiguration of myself.” The entry in the “Journal” runs on: “I wrote a short note to my wife, to tell her which way I had taken, and without

the least hesitation entrusted it to Job Sims, who was to go over to Bothwell the next day with some cattle for Mr. Russell [Job's employer], and who undertook to deliver the note personally at Nant. This man is an Englishman, and has been an old prisoner ; yet I know he would not sell that note to the enemy for a thousand pounds.”

From Job's hut, after breakfast and the completion of his first disguise, Mitchel took horse again ; H—— still riding with him, over a rough mountain of which the track was well outlined. They were destined now for the house of a Mr. Grover,<sup>1</sup> whose son was ready to help in the affair. Grover himself was a magistrate of the colony, and neither Mitchel nor H—— was acquainted with him, but they had no hesitation in riding up to the house. They met young Grover in the way. “ I am glad I met you,” he said, “ because it will save you the necessity of calling at my father's house ; the governor, you know, is a magistrate, and it is as well not to run risks.” H—— had played his handsome part, and now left Mitchel in the hands of Grover. Grover led him out of the mountain region, and entrusted him to a Mr. Wood, who carried him to the farm of the Burkes at Westbury.

There is an entry in the “ Journal ” dated June 16th : “ The Westbury police are patrolling night and day, for my sake ; but this is no more than the constables of all other districts are doing ; evidently all trace of me is lost ; and the Government folk have no reason for supposing me to be in this dis-

<sup>1</sup> A fictitious name, as Mitchel says. There are several fictitious names in the history of the escape. The true names are lost, and I have discovered no trace whatever of them. Some parish record in Tasmania might furnish a clue (the dates being not less historical than the itinerary of Mitchel), and it would be slightly interesting.

trict, rather than any other. At any rate, in any case, whatever may befall me, I feel absolutely out of the enemy's power. The end of the enterprise *now* must be America or a grave."

## III

At the end of a week, during which he had kept the strictest privacy of the Burkes' farmhouse, Mitchel received a note from Smyth. The brigantine *Don Juan*, belonging to Mr. Macnamara, sailing shortly from Hobart Town for Melbourne, would try to put in at some lonely bay on the north side of the island. To such a rendezvous Mitchel must make his way as best he could. On the 22nd of June it was learned that the vessel would call "at Emu Bay, five days hence." The journey to this spot was not above eighty miles; but it was now midwinter, the floods were out, and by land at all events Emu Bay had become "totally inaccessible." At all cost, however, the effort must be made; and it was thought that, could the *Don Juan* come eastwards a little towards Port Sorel, Mitchel and his escort might attain that point.

At ten on the night of the 24th he rode away with a cavalcade of seven—two Burkes, Wood and his brother, O'K——, O'Mara, and a Tipperary giant named Foley. Their first halt was at the house of O'K——, where beefsteaks hissed on a roaring fire; and here, in the heart of the Tasmanian bush, it was as though they had alighted in a corner of old Ireland.

"One of the peculiarities of Westbury district is that you find Irish families, and whole Irish neighbourhoods, associating together and seldom meeting



foreigners : for even the assigned convict-servants whom these people select are all Irish. Thus they preserve, even in the second generation, Irish ways and strong Irish accents ; and but a few weeks have gone by since, in this very house, on the death of O'K——'s old mother, a regular wake was held, and experienced crones raised a true *caoine* over the corpse, startling the cockatoos with their wild and unwonted *ululu*."

The moon went down : to horse again. By hill and frozen marsh, by deep creeks with rotten banks, they rode in darkness. From one peril at least the fugitive and his stalwart seven were secure ; through those wildernesses in winter no police would follow them. Mitchel himself was at this time an adept at bush riding, but never before, he says, had he encountered such a task for horsemen. In the red dawn of the 25th they were at one moment extricating O'K——'s horse from a morass, and at another assisting both O'Mara and his steed from a flooded creek in which they were all but swept away. Late that evening they came out from the hills upon the tide-water of the Tamar. Avoiding the little settlement of York in Devon, the midmost of the three northern counties, they made for the woods, and bivouacked there through the night. Daybreak saw them again in the saddle ; another four miles of difficult journeying, and then they caught the sound of the sea. " We scaled the sand-hills ; and there was the blessed sea—but, as far as the eye could sweep it, not a sail ! "

What to do next ? Where they were they could stay no longer, for their food was out, and the party must break up. For Mitchel there was the dismal prospect of retreating to some station among the

north-western mountains, where he might tarry as a stock-keeper until the spring.

Meanwhile, Wood proposed to carry him on the evening of this day to the dwelling of "a gentleman named Miller," an Englishman, long resident in London, at present established on the shore of Port Sorel inlet.

"Half a mile from Miller's we halted, and Wood rode on to make sure that no strangers were about the place. Miller himself returned with Wood. He had never seen me before; but seemed delighted that we had come to him. He assured us that as he had no servants at that time, and as his house was quite off all tracks and roads, I might, if necessary, remain three months there unsuspected. On the other side of Port Sorel inlet, which is not half a mile wide at the mouth, stands a township, with police office, magistrate, and the rest of the apparatus; and Miller says the last stranger who appeared at his house was a constable from Launceston, bearing the despatch a fortnight ago to all the stations along that coast, announcing my departure from Bothwell and enjoining vigilance for my sake.

"All special messengers,' said he, 'bearing despatches from Launceston, must come to me, and request me to put them across the water in my boat, which is the only boat on this side. So, you see, it is all right; you can stay here in perfect safety.

"O'K—— declared he could not see how this made all right, for, said he, 'If our journey in this direction comes to be known, as it must be in a few days, your next visitor will be another express constable.'

"The very thing,' said Miller, 'that we want. The fellow can't go over without my help: I can

make him drunk here, and take the despatch from him, or bribe him to return and say he delivered it ; or drown him, if you like, in the passage.' ”

To all but the drowning of the despatch-bearer Mitchel agreed ; and his friends went off, though not without promise to return at need. For a week or so he was sheltered by his new host, and then the Burkes turned up again with another scheme of escape. Mitchel was to go with them to Launceston, and thence by steamer to Melbourne. His passage had been secured, and he would go on board disguised as a priest, “ Father Macnamara.” Farewell at once, then, to his kind English host and hostess ; and once more in the saddle. On the 6th of July Mitchel and the Burkes slept at a hut in the woods, and on the 7th completed the sixty miles to Launceston. Here Mitchel “ got rigged up instantly as a Catholic priest—shaved from the eyes to the throat ; dressed in a long black coat, with upright collar, the narrow white band round the neck, and a broad black hat.” But in the end the captain was afraid to take him on board at Launceston ; so greatly, since Mitchel’s flight from Bothwell, had the rigour of searching been increased. There was nothing for it but to go by open boat forty-five miles below Launceston to Georgetown ; and on this new voyage, weary with sixty miles of riding, he entered at night-fall.

On the following day he was back at Launceston, baffled again !

Aided by yet another friendly stranger, Mr. Barrett, he had got within sight of Georgetown. Here in the woods of the western bank he lay while Barrett went off to reconnoitre. No sooner had Barrett gone than Mitchel perceived the steamer

rounding a promontory three miles away. She stopped, and the police-boat rowed out to overhaul her. To the utter dismay of Mitchel, the instant the police had done their work the vessel resumed her course for Melbourne. As she started, Barrett returned with the four-oared gig; Mitchel, gathering his clerical skirts around him, leaped in, and the men pulled for life. It was too late, the steamer was four miles ahead; the chance was lost. Back to Launceston they toiled all night through a shrieking storm which laid them twice on reefs. The captain of the steamer had never seen them, and had been afraid to wait for Mitchel after the departure of the police-boat.

Mitchel's friends began to think that Heaven had pronounced against him. Not so thought Mitchel, whose heart melted no jot; and he astonished them with a declaration that he would now go by public coach to Hobart Town, a distance of a hundred and twenty miles. The coach road traversed seven or eight townships, in which at least a dozen police stations must be reckoned with.

At every stage of this flight some brother unmet before is encountered. The Burkes, a Wood, a Miller, a Barrett, rise up out of the bush as Mitchel goes stealthily but steadfastly through it. The cases of Charles II and Prince Charles Edward excepted, no escape is forwarded by so many agents to whom the escaper is in effect unknown. It is one Connellan who takes places in the night mail for himself and Mitchel.

As "Father Blake" Mitchel travelled by coach to Hobart Town. In the conveyance he says:

"I found, besides Connellan, two other passengers inside, one of them a man whom I had met and

talked with, at least once before, and who certainly would have known me had I been less effectually disguised. He is T. MacDowell, late Attorney-General for the colony—a dangerous neighbour. Not that I believe it would have been running any risk to confide the matter to him, but there was another stranger. Mr. MacDowell tried to draw me into conversation, asked me about ‘my bishop,’ but I was shy, unsatisfactory, Jesuitical.

“Towards morning we passed the point of the mail road nearest to Bothwell; within sixteen miles; and I gazed wistfully up at the gloomy ridge of the Den Hill. Beyond that hill, embowered among the boscaiges of Bothwell, lies my little quasi-home, which my eyes will never see again, with all its sleeping inmates lulled by the murmuring Clyde.”

Horses were changed at a place called Greenponds, where Mitchel was known by sight to everyone. It was four o'clock of a winter's morning, but special constables were on duty. For all that Mitchel knew, they had risen early on his account, but no one recognised the Rev. Mr. Blake. At Bridgewater, not venturing to drive up in daylight to the Ship Inn at Hobart Town, he got down from the coach, passed the hours until evening in strolling to and fro along the Derwent, dined at the solitary inn, and stepped into the night mail. Within a few miles of Hobart Town, Kevin O'Doherty, who had come out to meet him, climbed the coach and plumped into the opposite seat. O'Doherty knew that Mitchel was to travel as a priest, but not a glance of recognition passed from his eyes. At Connellan's house in Collins Street, Hobart Town, Smyth received him just as unknowingly. His disguise was perfect.

Connellan came in, and within an hour a fresh

plan was struck out. The passenger-brig *Emma* was about to sail for Sydney. Owner and agent were well disposed, and Mitchel could be taken in her as contraband. On the evening of July 18th he stepped aboard as "Mr. Wright." With a shiver of delight he saw his wife and children sitting on the poop in the moonlight.

The *Emma* glided northwards to Sydney. At Sydney, Smyth, who had accompanied them, took lodgings for the family; and on the 28th of July they went on board the *Orkney Lass*, bound for San Francisco. There was a difficulty in getting away, and a day or two later we have this entry in the Journal:

"August 2nd.—On board. The complement of our crew is made up. We lifted our anchor at eleven o'clock. Very faint breeze, and that rather against us. The ship was to be searched at the Heads—the last searching.

"—It is over. The man five feet ten in stature, with dark hair, was recognised by 'no enemy. We cleared the Heads about four o'clock; and a fresh breeze sprang up from the north; and now the sun is setting beyond the blue mountains; and the coast of New South Wales, a hazy line upon the purple sea, is fading into a dream. Whether I ever was truly in Australia at all, or whether in the body or out of the body—I cannot tell; but I have had bad dreams."

On October 9th Mitchel and his little family and the devoted Smyth (who deserves a chapter to himself, for there is no more loyal confederate in an escape) sailed into the Golden Gate. They were three weeks in California, and journeyed thence to New York, into which Mitchel, at heart the simplest

of men, the devoutest of rebels, was made to enter with a kind of splendour. Our part in him is here at an end, but his life is of moment to its close. His grandson, Mr. John P. Mitchel, was Mayor of New York in 1913.





## XII

### THE FIRST MAN WHO BROKE THE BASTILLE

SINGULAR EXPLOITS OF THE ADVENTURER AND  
PRISONER STYLED THE ABBÉ COUNT DE BUQUOIT

“ *Fringed with fire.*”—TENNYSON.

“ *We can frame a ladder.*”—LONGFELLOW.

“ *A dark horse.*”—DISRAELI.

“ *You are not like Cerberus, three gentlemen at once, are you?* ”

SHERIDAN.



## THE FIRST MAN WHO BROKE THE BASTILLE

### I

THERE is no new thing. Latude, the tearful and vindictive, whose naughty but captivating narrative has touched the sensibilities of five generations of the credulous, was not the first prisoner who defeated the terrible Bastille. Forty-nine years earlier, if the evidence to be produced admits of so precise a reckoning, another person took the hazard of his life on an outer wall of this fortress. With Latude, in the light of the most recent French criticism, we have come to a very intimate acquaintance. His sufferings are great, his prowess as a prison-breaker is immense; but the man himself we are bidden, on the clearest proofs, not merely to condemn but to contemn.

His predecessor in one chamber and another of the Bastille is not at all so plain a character. If there is charm in a puzzle of identity, here, I make bold to say, is one which no scrutiny will resolve for us. It is a puzzle, moreover (though I would not overrate its interest), which until this moment has escaped attention. The few French writers whom the subject has engaged (and the far fewer English ones who copy them) have received as history some fantastic and not unaffecting statements which I have rather easily traced to the fancy of the inventor. Here, however, my slender credit

gives out ; for in the end the reader will perceive that with the inventor himself I stand on a footing of the haziest. The question to entertain us is, who was the prisoner that escaped from the Bastille forty-nine years before Latude ?

With this preamble I introduce the protean man who makes a faint mark in French annals under the style and title of the Abbé Count de Buquoit.

We are first to imagine him an orphan at the age of four. An uncle, the Count de Bouquoit,<sup>1</sup> takes indifferent charge of his studies. He tells us that at seventeen he entered the army, and, disgracing or committing himself in some way (his Memoirs, in the third person, are cryptic enough at points), he quitted or was cashiered from the service, and betook himself to penance in a retreat of the Jesuits. The Jesuits were too close to the world for him, and the penitent decided for the Trappists. Into this brotherhood of the mute he entered, and here he stayed until his health declined. The notion then took him of the life of a wandering monk, and he started on foot for Paris. The life contemplative was not, he had decided, for him.

Enfeebled by the rigours of the monastery he strayed into a vineyard and began a meal of grapes. While at this refection he was insulted, he says, by a peasant, who had possibly remarked that the grapes had an owner. In an instant La Trappe and all its exhortations were forgotten, and drawing the sword he had borne in the service of the king, Buquoit fell on his reprover. The man fled and his assailant was seized with remorse. He was wearing a rich coat (and seems altogether, for a travelling *religieux*, to have taken the road in somewhat dubious

<sup>1</sup> Spelled also Buquoy, Bucquoit, Bucquoy, etc.

guise), and this, to mortify himself, he bestowed on the first beggar whom he met.

Whither or how far the wanderer got we know not, and there falls in his broken narrative a gap of two years or so. Then we find him, still bent on renouncing the world, teaching in a seminary at Rouen, where youths were being prepared for the parish priesthood. His zeal and his eloquence in these modest seats attracted the notice of the Jesuits of Rouen, who vainly sought to entice him among them. He returned to Paris, fell sick again, and tells us that he lay two years betwixt life and death.

Recovering, he organised (on principles of his own) a community of priests in a house hired by him in the faubourg St. Antoine; was plagued and proceeded against for so doing; and, his health once more succumbing, he became at this wretched crisis a prey to religious doubt, and gradually resolved upon re-entering the world (" *Il devint moins dévot, et même il résolut de rentrer dans le monde*").

Getting in touch again with his family he felt a sudden desire to return to the army, and informs us that he was even on the point of raising a regiment. Meanwhile, faring into Burgundy on some business not very plain to the reader, he was there arrested on the curious charge of having promoted or aided a rising of *faux-sauniers*—smugglers, or unlicensed dealers in salt.<sup>1</sup> He cleared himself with little difficulty, but his day of trouble was

<sup>1</sup> Concerning the one-time notorious *gabelle*, or salt tax, a main source of revenue in France up to the era of the Revolution, no reader will be very eager for information. In the newest "History of France," Mr. Moreton Macdonald's, published in the autumn of 1915, the subject is discussed. In itself the *gabelle* was not an improper tribute, but its incidence was very unequal, and the mode of

dawning anew. Setting out again for Paris he encountered at Sollien two friends who were exclaiming against the terrible taxes of Louis XIV. During dinner at the inn Buquoit launched out on the same topic, broached a scheme of government under which all were to be happy, and was warmly applauded, not only by his two hosts, but by everybody in the room who heard him. This brave discourse, he whispers us, was presently to be used to his injury.

Continuing his journey to the capital he entered a little hostel in a village near Sens and called for food. A bowl of soup, a fatal bowl, was set before him. "Rather salt, this," says Buquoit, tasting it. "Salt seems cheap in these parts. You've had a visit from the smugglers, I suspect!" The landlady declared with vehemence that she "never had no dealings with them sort"; and proceeded to tell her guest of the dreadful fate of the whole band. All but thirty had been cut "in pieces," and the thirty cast into prison. "Poor devils, ah! poor devils," exclaimed Buquoit. "They should have had a man like me at their head. I'd have brought them out of it!"

In this strain he went on, denouncing taxes and the rest of it, until a bailiff of the place ("*recors*"), who chanced to be breakfasting at the next table, demanded to know who this orator might be. Receiving a snub for answer the bailiff went scowling out, returning presently with another limb. The

levying it unjust in the extreme. In the districts where the impost was heaviest ("*pays de grandes gabelles*"), the burden of it was intolerable, and Mr. Macdonald states that under Louis XIII "a man was obliged to do with less than one-third of the salt that he consumes to-day." The smuggler carried on his trade with the support of the whole country-side.

other limb had a following of five or six at his heels, and in a trice Buquoit was a prisoner.

Next came the provost of Sens. The provost was civil enough ; but, said he, since the gentleman had not his papers of identification on him, he must for the moment pass gaolwards. That evening, in brief, Buquoit found himself the guest of the prison of Sens, grievously suspected of having traduced the King's majesty, and of being leagued in Heaven knows what manner with the turbulent smugglers of salt.

There was a hostile Archbishop of Sens, with whom Buquoit had had passages at law, and his grace suggested that inquisition be made along all the route traversed by the prisoner since the hour of his departure from Paris. By this means every scrap of valiant talk on the traveller's part, his denunciations of unjust and unequal taxes and of government, came up to his hurt ; and plainer and plainer it grew that the case of this conspirator was not for the tribunal of Sens. To Paris it and he must go. So at two a.m. on a certain morning Buquoit was snatched from bed, ironed as to wrists and ankles, thrown into a carriage, and driven off under escort of a dozen archers.

From Sens he had twice attempted to free himself, and at Melun, on this progress to Paris, he made as worthy a bid as the situation allowed of : chained by one leg to his bed, and a guard sleeping or feigning sleep on the floor. Even at this first venture he seems to have shown something of Sheppard's knack in disposing of a manacle. But flight from the bedroom at Melun was in the main impossible, and Buquoit is as yet but a gifted novice.

The twelve King's archers brought him quite

safely to Paris, depositing him there at one of its oldest prisons (these many years demolished), Fort-l'Évêque.<sup>1</sup>

The escape of Buquoit from Fort-l'Évêque commends us to this one point at least, that the new will now and then transcend the old. In its chief and best particular it admits no parallel. The reservations must be made that the detail is Buquoit's own, and that it staggers us a little.

No sooner was he in, he says, than he set to work upon a plan for getting out.

The natural difficulties of the prison were extraordinary. It stood on a kind of precipice, and sheer and far below the rim of the walls lay one of the quays of Paris, known as the Valley of Misery. From Buquoit's window the view of the precipice was frightful; and in the prison a story was traditional of a former captive who after climbing to the top, and looking out, had retreated in dismay.

<sup>1</sup> Or For-l'Évêque, or Fors-l'Évêque. The name, at first sight curious, signifies the Bishop's Prison ("*forum episcopi*," the bishop's forum, the bishop's court). In its earliest days it was the seat of jurisdiction of the Bishop of Paris, whose legal representative had a lodging there at will. Later it was a pen for debtors and "refractory comedians" ("*comédiens récalcitrants*"); and in its associations with the theatre we discover the sole amusing episode in the chronicles of Fort-l'Évêque. During the reign of Louis XV, the players of the *Comédie française* quarrelled with and sent to Coventry a member of the company who would not pay his debts. On the night that they refused to act with him there was a tremendous to-do in the theatre; and next day, or a day or two later, the whole troupe was conveyed to Fort-l'Évêque. One of the party was that commanding and seductive actress, Mlle Clairon, who held a little court in her cell every afternoon. The punishment lasted a week; and when the comedians were released they gave permission to the debtor to resign his membership of the theatre.—Duban ("*Les Prisons de Paris sous la Révolution*") says that Fort-l'Évêque was standing early in the nineteenth century. Dulaure ("*Histoire Civile, Physique et Morale de Paris*") states very precisely that, "becoming useless," it was demolished in 1780. This we may accept, for there is no mention of Fort-l'Évêque among the prisons of the Revolution.



Buquoit took time to get his bearings, and came to think that the impossible might yield to diligence. Under pretence of faintness he had persuaded a warder to take him up to a window in the loft or lumber-room of the prison, and thence he had surveyed the scene. Returning to his cell he debated on the means of leaving it again unobserved. Of the implements of the prison-breaker he had none, and he sat in his cell and stared at his door and his walls. An inspiration of the suddenest informed him. He would escape as no one had ever before escaped. He would burn his way through the door of his cell!

A day or two to revolve this project, and we see him getting leave to roast his eggs over his own charcoal fire in his cell. The prison asleep, he plants his brazier beneath the door and waits upon the flame. It mounts (we must take this as we choose); and when the door is partly in ashes Buquoit creeps through the fire and smoke. No one stirs, not a nose in the prison is ravaged by the smell. But the fire must be quenched or it will spread. Buquoit's device baulks his English translator, but readers of Swift will recall the prowess (so indifferently rewarded!) of Captain Lemuel Gulliver at the burning of the palace of Lilliput. It seems a trifle inadequate; but the prison escaped the fire, and Buquoit escaped the prison.

From the corridor he mounted easily to the loft; but now there was the precipice to face which had cooled the resolution of that other fugitive. Immense iron spikes protruding at intervals from the prison wall multiplied the pains and terrors of the descent. Buquoit, moreover, was without a rope. What light he had I know not, but we are to understand that in the loft was stored a pile of mattresses,

and on these the prisoner went furiously to work till he had torn from the coverings strips sufficient for his purpose. The passage that follows in the narrative is not wanting in obscurity.<sup>1</sup>

What does this mean? He could scarcely have dragged his bed up to the loft. Does he, after twisting the strips into a rope, return with it to his cell and make his exit thence? Apparently not, for "*lucarne*" is commonly rendered an attic window, a window in a roof, or a sky-light; and sky-light or window in a roof is plainly the meaning imposed on us by the context. This refers us to a loft or top chamber, rather than to a cell underneath. It seems probable that Buquoit, a deft and ready man, had the forethought to carry up with him some part of the wood or iron of his bed, for use at need.

What is certain is that he got out.

Towards the point of morn he alighted on the quay of the Vale of Misery. Steering himself as best he could over the spikes projecting from the wall and window, he had saved neither clothes nor skin; and stood there torn, bleeding, panting, and shaken.

Barely recovering his wind, having no fixed course to shape, he made off at hazard. Early shopkeepers gazed at him from their doors. A parcel of roysterers from some night-house, stumbling on the scarecrow man, who dripped blood as he ran, started immediately in pursuit. A lucky downpour scattered them, and again Buquoit was saved. Turning and doubling he traversed St. Eustache and came to a café near the Temple. Here he entered, not without misgiving. From the Vale of

<sup>1</sup> "*Il les attacha [the strips of canvas] les unes aux autres, et en accrocha un bout qu'il noua à une des colonnes de son lit. Il mit cette colonne en travers près de la lucarne, et la corde se trouva sûrement accrochée dans le grenier.*"

Misery he had issued—and looked, as he was aware, a proper denizen of the same. The man of the house surveyed him with astonishment, and Buquoit gave one timid glance around and slunk off.

Whither now? He called to mind a relative of one of his servants, a woman who lodged near by at the unheard-of sign of the “*Nom de Jésus.*” To her he went with a legend of a night’s journey from the country and an attack by robbers in a wood. He had money, and this in such harbourage was doubtless his best passport.

Under shelter of the *Name of Jesus* he stayed until nightfall, and then judged it prudent to decamp. Should he fly the country—if this were possible? Or should he remain and seek aid in high quarters—even, perhaps, redress? An Abbé Count de Buquoit might take this course. Should he not appeal to “*le parlement,*” or even to the King himself?

From this period, the vain efforts of nine unpropitious months can be comprised in a few sentences. Into one asylum and another in turn he dives, despatching from each petition after petition to Louis XIV. This was a monarch whose policy, at whatever juncture, very seldom knew the weakness of sentiment or pity. Is it the affair of a discarded mistress? The beautiful and gentle La Vallière, the one woman who loved this stony little piece of high-heeled regal pomposity, dies unheeded in her convent of the Carmelites. Is it the affair of a prisoner of State? The Man in the Mask, after twenty-four years of imprisonment, droops into a coffin in the Bastille. Buquoit, Abbé and Count, late of Fort-l’Évêque, directed his petitions to the wrong address!

Nine months elapsing, and hope changing to a phantom, he made a desperate attempt to leave the country. Arrested at La Fère he was consigned to prison, suspected of this and that. From this crib (on a second essay) he effected an escape worthy of the hero of Fort-l'Évêque; was retaken; carried back to Paris, as from Sens—and this time over the drawbridge of the Bastille.

## II

And now, who is this problematic prisoner, for I have already hinted at a mystery? Not to break the narrative, but for a moment to divert it into quite another channel, let us try to come at the man himself, whom a cell of the Bastille is about to swallow. We have surprised him in sundry postures, for the most part rather uncommon. Within the purview of adventure, transformations of guise and character answering to these are rare enough. Here, to begin, is a young officer of noble birth in the army of Louis XIV. By and by, he either rids himself of the army or the army rids itself of him, and he comes under the influence of the Jesuits. He is now a penitent, and in this humour finds the Jesuits too worldly for him. He goes over to the Trappists. The austerities of *La Trappe* are greater than he can bear, and he sets out on a pious march through France. At Rouen he is teacher or pupil in a seminary of budding priests. Returning to Paris, he opens a religious house of his own. Re-entering the world, he has passages that bring suspicion on him as a friend of the salt smugglers and a fearless critic of King Louis. He is seized and imprisoned. From Fort-l'Évêque in Paris he makes a perilous and

brilliant escape. All eccentricities embraced, he seems a rash, half-balanced, honest character, mixed of the most inconsistent qualities. Who is he? Who is the Abbé Count de Buquoit?

Under the name Buquoit, in the Catalogue of the British Museum, enquirers are referred to "Archambaud (Jean A. D.) Count de." Under this latter we have two entries:

"*Histoire Singulière de l'Abbé de Buquoit, prisonnier de la Bastille*, 1788. 8vo." And

"*Événement des plus rares, ou l'histoire du S<sup>r</sup> Abbé Comte de l'Abbé Comte de Buquoy. Singulièrement son évasion du Fort-l'Évêque—l'Allemand à côté, revue et augmentée, Deuxième Édition, Avec plusieurs de ses Ouvrages, Vers et Proses, et se vend chez Jean de la Franchise, rue de la Réforme à l'Espérance à Bonnefoy*. 1719."

It will be observed that the "*Histoire Singulière*" bears a date nearly seventy years later than the "*Événement*." There are no other dates in either work. Both volumes are practically anonymous, and I can trace no other book on the subject. My reason for believing that there *is* no other will presently be stated. The British Museum possesses no autographical authority, no memoir whatever in the first person. The two Buquoit volumes on its shelves, such as their worth is, are probably of great rarity. In the splendid collection of the London Library there is not a copy of either.

In the "*Histoire Singulière*" and the "*Événement*" we have, I think, the source of the few accounts of Buquoit published in French. In English there are, I am pretty sure, no original notices of any kind. The man himself made no such stir as Latude did, and his name soon dropped out of history.

From a first and rapid examination of their contents I received the impression that Buquoit, and he alone, was the author of both works. He had, I thought, at an interval of sixty-nine years (he lived, it is said, to the age of ninety), taken in hand again the "*Événement*" of 1719, and transformed it into the "*Histoire Singulière*" of 1788. This impression, I am now convinced, is erroneous. It is wellnigh as certain as may be that we have of Buquoit's nothing but the "*Événement*."

As a specimen of printing and binding this is an elegant little 12mo; a lovely bit of genuine old calf (a thing not easy to come by in these days), smelling delicately; an exquisite fount of type, very small and close. The German version runs side by side with the French. As a literary affair, on the other hand, the "*Événement*" is a rag-bag. There is here no attempt at the calculated, artistic, emotional appeal of that notable performer Latude. Buquoit's style, if a foreigner can pronounce on it, is loose and undistinguished, not always even quite grammatical. The thing as a whole is a hotch-potch and full of matter quite irrelevant. Buquoit seems to have thrown together what he regarded as his finest compositions; with (as I at first thought) a series of letters exchanged between two ladies, one at Paris, the other at the Hague. It is from these epistles that we are enabled to erect the fabric of Buquoit's astonishing adventures. Not one of them is dated, and in this circumstance arose my doubts concerning them.

A word now as to the "*Histoire Singulière*," the 1788 volume which also, as I have said, I attributed to Buquoit. Here we have a simple and plain-going narrative of the escapes, extracted (verbatim

for the most part) from the “ *Evénement* ” letters of *ces dames* of Paris and the Hague. The mass of extraneous and superfluous stuff, including poor Buquoit’s finest compositions, has gone by the board.

These, then, are the two works, and I should now say why I at last satisfied myself that they constitute the sole original sources. A raid on French encyclopædias and dictionaries of biography revealed the fact (and none other of consequence) that the authors of articles on Buquoit have based them entirely and unreservedly on the “ *Evénement* ” and the “ *Histoire.* ” They have discovered no other fountain. It will be sufficient to indicate Firmin Didot’s fearsome publication in sixty volumes of small type, and the not less familiar “ *Biographie Universelle.* ” Here are in the main the same statements, with the same attribution.

Presumably therefore the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has nothing more to show than our own British Museum, and the two volumes are the spring of the streamlet that has flowed from them. What has appeared in English on Buquoit’s account is negligible. Davenport, in his “ *History of the Bastille* ” (1892), has merely translated, without acknowledgment, the article in the “ *Biographie Universelle.* ”

As to the two works, I submit, on final examination of both, that the “ *Evénement* ” is unquestionably Buquoit’s own, and that he has no part in the second. The letters of the lady of Paris and the lady of the Hague are a game he plays with the reader. Both ladies are of the celebrated family of Sarah Gamp’s Mrs. Harris. There was no sich parties. The device on Buquoit’s part has a touch of clumsi-

ness, but it gives him an advantage—unimportant enough. Challenged on this point or that, he can say that the story is told by one lady for the entertainment of another, and is nowhere meant to be brought to the bar of history.

Sixty-nine years later some anonymous literary person in Paris, owning or getting possession of the “*Événement*,” sets out to make a new version of it, and the “*Histoire Singulière*” is the result. The volume of 1719 we may suppose to have been long out of print; it has not in itself life enough for a season. Out of the letters of this volume the transcriber unknown digs a new history of the escapes; and both works have passed as Buquoit’s own. This I conjecture to be the truth of the matter.

But we are now coming to the interest of discovery. In the sparse French notices of Buquoit there is never a hint that he is not the man who poses for us in the letters of the “*Événement*.” From first to last he has been taken at his own valuation: devotee, novice of the Jesuits, Trappist, soldier, founder of a religious house, defender of the rights of the people, and what not. All this while, in that vast repository, magazine or chronicle of crime, misdemeanour, and misfortune, the Archives of the Bastille, there have lain a few dry sentences condensing for us the true history of the “*Abbé Count de Buquoit*.” The most pregnant of these I here for the first time reproduce. In Funck-Brentano’s transcription of the Archives is this entry: <sup>1</sup>

*Du Bucquoy ou Du Bucquoit de Maurican (l’abbé Jean Pierre <sup>2</sup>), ci-devant prieur de Nogent-sur-Seine—Entré le 9 Juin, 1707, sur ordre contresigné Ponchar-*

▪ *Register of the Bastille*, M. 1991.

▪ This should be Jean Albert, I think.



*train. Arrêté comme espion de Malborough [sic]. J. P. Dubusquoit, dit de Monceaux, dit de Maurican, dit Becquet, dit Besquet, dit Dudois du le More. Arrêté à Sens pour faux-saunage, transféré au Fort-l'Evêque, d'où il s'évada la nuit du 24-25 Septembre, 1706. Arrêté de nouveau à La Fère le 11 Mai, 1707. Transféré à la Bastille le 9 Juin, 1707, d'où il s'est sauvé le 5 Mai, 1709. Arrête de nouveau à La Fère le 11 Mai, 1709.*

In English :

Du Bucquoy or Du Bucquoit de Maurican (the abbé Jean Pierre), one-time Prior of Nogent-on-Seine. Entered June 9, 1707, on an order countersigned by Ponchartrain. Arrested as one of Marlborough's spies. J. P. Dubusquoit, *alias* de Monceaux, *alias* de Maurican, *alias* Becquet, *alias* Besquet, *alias* Dudois du le More. Arrested at Sens for salt-smuggling. Sent on to Fort-l'Évêque, whence he escaped on the night of the 24-25th September, 1706.<sup>1</sup> Rearrested at La Fère, May 11th, 1707. Transferred to the Bastille, June 9th, 1707, from which he disappeared May 5th, 1709. Arrested again at La Fère, May 11th, 1709.<sup>2</sup>

Exit at this point, under his panoply of *aliases*, the "Abbé Count de Buquoit" ! Here is no Abbé, here is no Count, here is no Buquoit, or Bucquoy, or Archambaud. But we must detain him a moment longer. His *dossier*, or docket, is not yet complete.

<sup>1</sup> The clerk of the register is summary in his style, and saves his literary labours. The entry begins with Buquoit's reception at the Bastille, on seizure for espionage. His earlier arrest at Sens carries us back to the salt business.

<sup>2</sup> This, I think, is a slip of the clerk's pen, or he has forgotten or neglected to amend his entry. A traveller, suspected of being Buquoit, was arrested on this date and almost immediately afterwards released. Buquoit himself, quite safe at this hour, seems never again to have been in custody.

I turn to Ravaisson's edition of the Archives, which is fuller than Funck-Brentano's.<sup>1</sup> Here we discover the State correspondence on the subject. It runs to some fifty letters, long and short. Out of these I cull one of the very briefest. It is from the Abbé of *La Trappe* to the minister d'Argenson.

*"Du Bucquoy, au sujet duquel vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire, ne se trouve pas sur nos registres. Il aurait pu dire l'année de sa retraite, son surnom, celui du père maître des novices, et autres marques.  
A. B."*

In English :

"Du Bucquoy, concerning whom I am honoured by your letter, is not entered on our books. It would be interesting to know the year in which he came to us, his domestic name, the name of the priest responsible for the novices at that date—and other particulars."

Thus also in his turn vanishes the Trappist !

The case, at the end of such a hearing as has been possible, leaves on our hands a man of no identity. Priest, soldier, adventurer of whatever kind, he has laughed at us, not very wittily, and to no apparent purpose ; but he has kept his mask, and it is impenetrable. No one knows, or will know, who was the "Abbé Count de Buquoit."

After his discomfiture as a man, I am now again

<sup>1</sup> Space availing, it would be possible, I think, to interest the reader in the history of these documents, a history quite exceptional. In boxes in a hall of the Bastille the chronicle of the fortress from the year 1659 was carefully disposed. Thousands of papers had been arranged, classified, and docketed. On the day of the taking of the Bastille, and for two days afterwards, these registers were kicked about the courtyard of the prison, ransacked, and pillaged. The Electoral Assembly appointed commissioners to collect them. In the last century the labour of classification was undertaken by François Ravaisson. Ravaisson was succeeded by Funck-Brentano, who devoted thirteen years to his task.

to show him as a prison-breaker, who, if he has rivals in the art, is on a footing of equality with the masters.

## III

It was on the 9th of June, 1707, that the Governor of the Bastille received this picaresque hero of the six or seven aliases. Of prisoners of no particular estate the Bastille was at all times a touch contemptuous, and Buquoit was placed in the basement of the tower which he calls the Bretignière. This I conceive to be the Bazinière, for there was no tower named Bretignière.<sup>1</sup>

In the dungeon of the Bazinière he stayed to undergo his first interrogation. This completed, he was removed to a chamber on the third floor where were several other prisoners. Buquoit began at once to sound them on a project of escape. He had money and jewels, said he, and would divide them among the comrades who got away with him. One of the party ("another abbé," says Buquoit complacently)

<sup>1</sup> The Bastille had eight circular towers, connected by curtains of equal height, which gave to the fortress its appearance of a gigantic sarcophagus. Each tower had its name. "There were," says Funck-Brentano, "the Corner, the Chapel, and the Well towers, names readily accounted for by their position or by details of their construction. Then came the Bertaudière and Bazinière towers, baptized by the names of former prisoners. The Treasure tower was so called because it had received on many occasions . . . the custody of the public money. . . . The seventh was known as the County tower, owing its name . . . to the feudal dignity called the County of Paris [every reader will here recall a character in "Romeo and Juliet"]." The eighth bore the discordant name of the Tower of Liberty. Here, however, were lodged favoured and exceptional prisoners, "in the liberty of the court." Funck-Brentano, whose style is always delightful, may have depicted the Bastille in colours too delicate; but the fables of Latude and Linguet (the chief offenders, perhaps) have been pierced, and in the eighteenth century, at any rate, it was none too dismal a dwelling for prisoners of any social standing. Does this suggest that the régime was a little snobbish? Well, it was. Voltaire once spent twelve days there as a

betrayed the plot to the Governor; and Buquoit himself was carried again to his dungeon. In order to leave it, he feigned illness and was presently put back "into society." Under this pretext and that he succeeded in making the circuit of all the towers of the Bastille, and in the course of time became an inmate of the Bertaudière. His new quarters he shared with a German baron von Peken and "an Irishman." Taking a dislike to the Irishman, Buquoit induced the warders to remove him. Having the baron to himself, he proposed in the first instance to transform him from a Lutheran into a Catholic, and in the second to take him as partner in a flight from the Bastille. In the one proposal and the other von Peken acquiesced, and while Buquoit argued the merits of Catholicism they both tried their hands on an old window of the cell. Yet again was Buquoit wide of his fate. The baron, long a guest of the Bertaudière, had been in the habit of talking through the chimney to prisoners on the floor above. In these conversations Buquoit had

prisoner, and was ordered by the lieutenant of police to be treated "with all the consideration due to his genius." The supreme romance of the Bastille is that of Mdle de Launay, who found a lover within the walls, and said long afterwards, "My imprisonment was the happiest time in my life." As the supreme tragedy of the Bastille, having regard to all the circumstances of the history, I am disposed to mention the unheeded death—November 19th, 1703—of the prisoner whom we believe to be the Man in the Iron Mask. The note in the journal of Du Junca, King's lieutenant at the Bastille ("M. Giraut, our chaplain, confessed him yesterday, is surprised at his death," etc.), is one of the saddest little pages ever written. But for Paris in general the Bastille (how little soever worthy of its reputation) stood as the ogre in stone of the city; and this character it kept until, on a day in the dawn of the Revolution, it was suddenly and swiftly and with scarce an effort overthrown. Restif de la Bretonne, a writer at once curious and licentious and speculative, with a niche of his own in French literature, says in his "*Nuits de Paris*": "It was a nightmare, that fearful Bastille; and as I passed it, evening by evening, on my way down the Rue Saint-Gilles, I turned my eyes from its walls."

had some part, but being little acquainted with the comrades overhead he had kept his counsel on the scheme of evasion. Not so the German, whose secret was divulged by one "Joyeuse," son of a magistrate of Cologne. The consequences of the disclosure were less grave than they might have been. The author of the plot was transferred to the Liberty tower, but his baron was allowed to accompany him, for the Governor seems seriously to have believed that Buquoit was making a convert.

In Liberty the pair went to work afresh. There was human possibility, Buquoit thought, of descending to the ditch or moat of the Porte Saint-Antoine. In his comings and goings through the fortress he had contrived to bring together (and convey from tower to tower) quite a little armoury of nails and knife-blades, bits of iron and copper, all of which he had sharpened up on his pitcher. For a ladder, they stripped the wicker casings of their wine bottles, eking them out with scraps of sheets and napkins. This precious store, when Buquoit and the baron were not at work, was buried in a hole scooped in the floor of the cell.

The preparations were rounded off; the hour of flight seemed almost due. On a sudden the flooring gave way, and the two comrades were precipitated into the room below, where a Jesuit lay ill. This poor fellow was disordered in his wits, and the apparition of Buquoit and von Peken hurled from on high drove him clean mad. Buquoit fell to conjuring him in Latin, and the Jesuit passed from terror to terror. The entry of a warder did less to relieve than to complicate the situation. Buquoit and the baron were, of course, reconducted to their own apartment; but here, with a gaping floor, it was

unlikely they would long remain. To what new cell or chamber they were taken Buquoit does not tell us. Von Peken by this time had had a surfeit of adventure ; and, chagrin merging in despair, he one night opened a vein with a penknife. Buquoit awoke to find him in a drizzle of blood. His clamours on the door brought aid upon the scene, and Peken's attempted suicide led him straight to liberty. The Governor had in fact received orders to release him, but had proposed to do a little further bleeding of the prisoner for his private ends. He was healed, and set at large.

Buquoit had lost his labour, and now they thrust him up to the very dome of the tower. This in the summer months was a very passable residence, but the rule of winter had begun ; and Buquoit, seeing thin and haggard faces in every corner, thought the Governor had sent him there to die. He had reached, as he fancied, a passage leading nowhere ; but it was in a strait of this kind that he always found an inspiration. He should 'certainly die in the attic of the tower, he said ; but if the Governor would give him leave to step down a stage or two he would willingly undertake the spiritual cure of another prisoner, a Protestant, Granville by name, whose conscience a pious warder had told him was opening to the beauties of Catholicism. Of this Granville, or Grandville, Buquoit had just got wind as a prisoner ready and pining to take the road. The model of a pious Governor, scenting another chance of conversion, did not hesitate to put Buquoit and Granville together. Two other prisoners were sent to keep them company. Buquoit—his hand on the Bible offered by the Governor to compose the doubts of Granville—bound the little company in



On a sudden the flooring gave way, and the two comrades were precipitated into the room below.





an oath, which they signed with a straw dipped in the soot of the chimney.

The leader then informed them that he had still a "*corps de réserve*"—a small file, with which he proposed at once to try conclusions on the grating of the window. He had also preserved, as he showed them, some portions of the osier ladder, his own and Peken's handiwork. Using the file in turn they discussed the future of the enterprise; and it was agreed that, should they arrive at the moat, each man had then better look to himself.

On the night chosen for the attempt, all being hushed in the fortress (but were there no warders on duty!), the conspirators removed their window-bars and prepared to descend. Fearing that their forms suspended in the air might be seen from the cells below, they let down a long sheet which covered all the windows to the ground. Next there was the ladder to fix, and this seems to have been made fast, not to the wall, but to a kind of sundial, which Buquoit had constructed some days previously and which the sentries had already learned to regard without suspicion. These precautions taken, the ladder was smeared with soot, and all they now asked was a drowsy guard and a descent without a fall.

Buquoit, as chief of the expedition, was allowed to go first.<sup>1</sup> Once below it would be his business to keep an eye on the sentries and, at need, to send warning up by pulling on a light cord suspended from the window of the cell. He climbed down without the least mishap. In the moat, he tells us, he waited two hours, receiving no sign whatever from the comrades above. Vainly he twitched the

<sup>1</sup> "*Pour recevoir les machines qu'on devoit lui jeter, et dont chacun devoit se servir à sa manière*"—whatever that may mean.

signal-cord ; no one answered him. Had some dispute arisen at the last moment ? They were very prone, he says, to quarrels.

No ; here comes lumbering through the window, far above, one of those " machines " to which reference is made in the footnote. What it was I cannot say, nor why Buquoit's companions feared to use the ladder that had supported him. Perhaps they were not ill-advised, for two of them got safely to ground. They had had some difficulty in forcing themselves through the window of the cell, and device after device had been tried : hence the inordinate delay. Unfortunate Granville, a man of avoirdupois, had altogether failed to launch himself. His two remaining cell-mates, a nameless pair, had offered to abandon their flight : he would not hear of it.

There were now three fugitives in the moat, and Buquoit—or so he tells us—had a scheme prepared. The other two disliking it he decided to trust to his own resources. He had with him one small osier ladder. With this he climbed out of the moat at the moment when a sentry had turned on his beat. Again he had to mount (the counterscarp, presumably), and on he went until he reached a deep gutter, whence he leaped or dropped into the Rue St. Antoine, nearly lacerating an arm on a hook outside a butcher's shop.

His own escape was achieved, but where were the two who had refused to follow him ?

His story at this point is, that at about the instant of getting clear of the fortress he heard a cry as of a half-strangled person, followed almost instantaneously by a musket-shot. Had a sentry surprised the fellow-fugitives whom Buquoit had left

behind? He never knew; but the impression clung to him through life that they had met their fate at the closing stage of the adventure.

For himself, he did what a prudent man with a skin to save would do. He took to his heels. Making half the circuit of Paris, he stayed his flight at the house of a friend, who admitted him with cordiality, tendered his purse with generosity—and counselled a speedy departure from Paris and France. In Switzerland Buquoit found a refuge. What did or did not afterwards happen to him is a history without a clue. We may believe, if we please, that in Hanover he was pensioned by George I “for the versatility of his talents.”

Did he confide to the king (who could get a step or two further in French than he ever got in English) that his essential “talent” lay in the bursting of a king’s prison? In this exceptional art our interest in him begins; in this it terminates. If, as to the most of his career, he has beguiled us with fibs, we may still take leave of him without resentment, for he leaves no malice in his grave. Over a flagon of wine—and he seems not to have cared an ounce whether the curtains were drawn or the company to his choosing—Buquoit was a man to talk with you, and in these unruffled hours he had nothing to conceal. Taking to his anonymous pen, it has pleased him to conceal almost everything. Had he a reason for hoaxing us? Beyond his dust may lie some mystery that has slipped with him across the great horizon.

*Who was he?*

THE END

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